A LIFE OF JESUS

By BASIL MATHEWS

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A LIFE OF JESUS

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W. Holman Hunt.

NAZARETH.

A LIFE OF JESUS

By BASIL MATHEWS

WITH TWO
ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOURS
BY WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT AND
THIRTY-THREE PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE

THE majority of the newspapers published in the five continents of the world and most of the millions of letters written by people of every race are dated from the birth of a boy in a country town on the eastern fringe of the Roman Empire.

He grew up in the home of a working carpenter, and until he was about thirty years old worked with his own hands at that craft. He then, for two or three years, taught a group of young men, some of them fishermen and none of them learned or powerful, and he healed people. He wrote no books. He was never in any government. He had no army. In fact he was executed by the Roman government in a horrible way reserved for the worst criminals and for rebels.

Why, then, is the history of mankind dated as either before or after his birth? Why not from the birth of Augustus, who was Emperor when he was born? Or from that of Alexander the Great, who not only shook continents with the tread of his armies, but in the trail of whose conquests Greek thought and art—a new and wonderful civilization—flowed? Or from that of Julius Caesar or Napoleon? Why from the birth of Jesus of Nazareth?

There can hardly be a more fascinating or a more important thing to know than the life and personality of this man from whose birth we date everything: what he did and said and was. But how can we find the truth about him? He was born more than nineteen hundred years ago. How can he, across

nearly two thousand years, become real to us? How can he live for us as he was then?

After coming back sixteen years ago for the first time from the land where Jesus lived, I started to try to write down the story of Jesus' life so that it should be at least real to myself. I tried also to set it down in language real and living for a boy or girl who has never even read or heard anything about him.

To do that with complete success is, of course, impossible. In the attempt, however, I have lived for months at a time and travelled one year after another in the land where he lived, and have followed the tracks along which Jesus walked in Palestine. I have tried through those years to feel and think my way into the life that he lived, the truth that he taught, and, most of all, what he himself was in relation to the life of the people under the Roman Empire in his day. This has not only thrown light on many things that were before obscure and difficult for me to understand, but it has helped to make the drama of his life so enthralling and convincing to myself that I could not but try to set it down.

It is far above any writer's power, however, to convey in words what he is. That can be found out only by following him oneself.

The story of the life is in the chapters that follow. I have followed the usage of the New Testament and of writers like Bishop Gore in employing a small initial for the personal pronouns referring to Jesus. The authorities for the life are described in the notes at the end of the book. There, also, thanks are given to the friends who have given such generous help in the work of writing this book.

Permission to reproduce the two pictures by Holman Hunt was given by the late Mr. J. Goodier Haworth, of Altrincham, Cheshire, whose father secured them from the artist on his return from Palestine, where he painted them. All the photographs reproduced in the book were taken by the author in Palestine and Transjordania at different times during the last sixteen years.

BASIL MATHEWS.

1930.

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PART I

THE YOUNG CHILD

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

A TIRED donkey, head down and grey ears drooping, picked its way deftly along the winding, stony path up a terraced hill-side. On its back, on a saddle of mats, sat a Hebrew maiden. Her face was hidden in the shadows of the woollen wrap over her head.

By her side walked a bearded man. His long robe was caught up and the ends tucked under his girdle to free his legs for walking. His sandalled feet were covered with the dust of travel. For three days they had been walking southward from their home in Nazareth among the hills of Galilee. Joseph knit his brows. He was anxious. He must get his young wife, Mary, safely housed before night fell. For she was come to the time when her child should be born.

The flat roofs of square white houses in the little town crowned the limestone ridge ahead of them. The hills, the northern slope of which they were now slowly climbing, ran from east to west. Ahead of them on the path were many other travellers—some on donkeys, some afoot, a few on camels.

'Will there be room?' he asked himself uneasily.

For Joseph and Mary were only two out of crowds of people who that day were journeying from many parts of the land to this hill-town of Bethlehem in Judaea. The Roman Emperor, Augustus, was more eager than any imperial ruler before him had ever been to know the exact number of people under his sceptre. His empire stretched from the Arabian deserts east of Judaea westward all across North Africa to the Atlantic Ocean and over the forests of Europe, up to the islands of the Britons.

Augustus, therefore, at intervals ordered lists to be made of the people in different parts of the Roman Empire. He had repeatedly taken a census of the Egyptians. The people of

Palestine were now, in their turn, to be enrolled. They were told to go to their home-towns and villages. There the head of each household was to tell the official registrar the names of his family. All the people whose home-town was Bethlehem, but who lived elsewhere, had, therefore, to start off to the town.

Joseph was very proud of the fact that Bethlehem was his home-town. He could, in the sunset glow, see white sheep nibbling the scanty grass of the hill-sides. A shepherd-boy playing a plaintive, simple tune on his home-made wooden pipe was leading his flock slowly to their stone-walled fold. Joseph thought of his own ancestor, the heroic, ruddy-faced shepherd-boy, David, who, just a thousand years earlier, led his sheep up that same Bethlehem hill-side, where he slew the lion and the bear, and in a valley not far away slung a stone into the forehead of Goliath, growing up at last to become the king of his nation.

As Joseph walked up the last mile to Bethlehem, he knew that the white-bearded priest, Samuel, climbed along this very way with his cruse of oil to anoint the boy David for kingship. Below, in the valley, Joseph could see the fields where in the springtime the silver ears of barley and the tawny ears of wheat waved. In those fields, Joseph's still more distant ancestress, the lovely girl Ruth, who came here from the far-away hills of Moab, gleaned the ears of corn; and when she lifted her eyes to the face of Boaz, the rich farmer of Bethlehem, won his love. These cornfields gave to the town its name of Bethlehem, the House of Bread.

The donkey at last stepped into the main street of the town. The air was fresh and cool, for they were over two thousand five hundred feet above sea-level. Brisking up at the prospect of the journey's end and a full manger, the ass trotted along toward the house where they hoped to stop. As they entered the courtyard Joseph's heart sank. Camels and donkeys, men and boys, filled the place.

Joseph went to the host to ask for room. The man—a

'You may stay in the stable if you wish', said the host.

The photograph is taken from the guest-room divided from the lower stable by the manger.
For detailed description see Appendix: Note 4.

friend or even, maybe, a relative of his—shook his head. The guest-room was full. The guest-room was, as so many were and are, the raised end of the floor of a long, single room of which the lower half was stable. This upper half of the floor was raised so that people could rest there on their mat-beds unrolled upon the hard, but clean earth. They could, at the same time, keep watch over their beasts in the lower half of the place—the stable. For at the stable end of this upper half was a kerb on the level of the floor, but standing a foot or more in height from the stable floor.[1] Below this kerb was the lower half of the room, where the animals were stabled. A long trough was hollowed in the hardened earth all along the top edge of this kerb. This formed a manger, in which the oxen and donkeys munched beaten straw and barley.

'You may stay in the stable if you wish,' said the owner of the guest-room. 'It is all that I have to offer.'

This meant that Joseph and Mary must lie in the lower part with the animals. So Joseph helped Mary down. Taking the mats and robes that had formed the saddle during the day, he spread them near the wall on the stable floor which—like all Bethlehem—was on the rock. The floor had straw on it for bedding for the animals. There Mary lay down on the mats to rest. Taking cheese and bread, dried figs and olives from the wallet, Joseph and Mary took their quiet evening meal together by the flickering light of a saucer lamp. The donkey, his grey muzzle in the manger, contentedly munched his barley and broken straw. The oxen, tired with the day's ploughing in the valley, chewed the cud after their supper.

At the upper end—the guest-room part—women rested. The voices of men could be heard arguing in the courtyard outside. There was the stir of many people, the sing-song of a camel-man chanting some stormy ballad of war and love, the throaty grumbling of the camels, and the barking of the dogs. Gradually, under the stars that looked down from the

[1] See photograph, Pl. I.

indigo sky, the noises of Bethlehem and the movements in the courtyard died down as, one after another, the men rolled themselves in their sheepskin robes and slept.

All was silent.

The world seemed to Joseph to hold its breath as though waiting. Then, from the stable, came a sound unlike all the voices that had died away. It was the cry of a new-born child.

Mary, unrolling a small bundle at her side, took out the clothes—a square, a little jacket, and a long broad strip of cloth. This last she gently wound round and round her first-born son, looking proudly into his face. Then she laid him down in a little nest that Joseph made in the crushed straw in the manger. The baby-boy lay there while his mother, weary and happy, wrapped round with Joseph's woollen cloak and lying on her mat-bed on the earth with her face toward her son, slept.

In the morning a group of men whose faces were seamed and burnt by the sun, each carrying a crook and a stout staff and clothed in a rough sheepskin coat, walked in haste down the street of Bethlehem. These shepherds, by inquiry, found the guest-house where Joseph and Mary were. They saw him standing by her as she lay on her mat-couch. In the manger, in the swaddling clothes, with only his face visible, lay the baby.

The shepherds had a strange story to tell—and, after they had seen the child, they made known to Joseph and Mary the wonderful thing that had come to pass.

'We were in the fields,' their spokesman said, 'keeping guard over our flock in the night-watches. A Messenger of God came and stood by us. There was a shining light about us—the glory of the Lord. We were much afraid. But the Messenger of God said to us:

'"Do not be terrified; for, see, I bring you good news of great joy, news that will be for all people. This very day a child is born in Bethlehem, the city of David, a saviour, the

anointed Lord. This is the sign—you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

'Suddenly', the man went on, 'there appeared with the Messenger a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

> '"Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace
> Among men of goodwill."'

'When they went away from us we said to one another: "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened." So we hurried here.'

There was great astonishment in the hearts of all those who heard this. Mary kept the things that they said in her memory, and thought them over quietly in her heart. She recalled how, away in her home in Nazareth in Galilee, a Messenger from God had come to her also and had said to her:

'Hail, for you are highly favoured: God is with you.'

She had been greatly troubled at this and had cast about in her mind wondering what this greeting could mean. But the Messenger had told her (as he had the shepherds) not to be afraid.

'Fear not, Mary,' he said, 'for you have found favour with God and shall have a son. You shall call his name "God saves" or Jesus. He shall be great, he shall be called the Son of the Highest. God shall give him the throne of David. He shall reign over the people for ever. Of his Kingdom there shall be no end.'

And now that son was born. And they called him 'Jesus'.[1]

[1] For a discussion on the probable date of the birth of Jesus, and the sources of the stories about his birth and infancy contained in Chapters I–III, see Appendix, note 3, p. 460.

CHAPTER II

THE WISE MEN AND THE DESPOT

THREE camels lurched up the last steep curves of the broken road that climbs the harsh hills from Jericho to Jerusalem. Three bearded men were on the camels' backs, seated on rich saddle-rugs from which tassels danced. They wrinkled their brows as they gazed fixedly toward the hill-crest ahead of them. The end of their long travel was near; and they were eager to discover what fortune they would have in their adventure.

They had come far; from the north-east beyond the Arabian desert. All three were Magi, men wise in the knowledge of the stars and the meaning of dreams. They crested the ridge. There was in the air a tang that they had never known. For they lived in the great mountain table-land of Persia, far from every ocean; and this sunset breeze from the salt, open sea was cool with dew.

They came round the shoulder of the Mount of Olives. Their eyes gleamed. Like a queen on her throne, a wonder-city spread its walls and towers over the hills. Above the city, caught in the blaze of the sun, the roof of new gold that crowned the snow-white mass of the Temple flamed with light. The three men paused, holding in their camels, while they drank in a vision that had no peer in all the world, except the glory that was Athens.

Jerusalem!

With quickened stride the tired camels plunged down the road into the valley of the Kidron. Climbing the other side, they were swallowed in the deep shadows of the city gate. They turned into an inn. That night, sitting around the charcoal fire that glowed in its brazier in the courtyard of the inn, the Wise Men told the story of their journey. They were Magi, they explained, priest-scholars of the learning of the East, which taught men to read the secrets of the future from the movements of the planets. Even the Jews

'The three men had come far.'

The men in the photograph are crossing the Jordan valley. The hills of the Wilderness of Judaea rise in the background.

held the wisdom of the Magi in deep awe. So the camel-men, the travelling merchants, and the others who sat round in a group on the ground, with the glow of the night-fire on their attentive faces, listened with reverence to the story of the three Wise Men from the East.

What had drawn them on the long trail from Persia?

'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' asked the Magi. 'We saw his star at its rising,[1] and we are come to worship him.'

All over the lands of the East men held that a new comet or star, or a strange conjunction of planets, meant that a great man was coming into the world. At that time men talked far and wide of the expected coming of a new King of the Jews. This was because the Jews, who were now scattered over the world from Spain to Persia, were on the tiptoe of expectation for the coming of their Prince from God. This Messiah, the 'Anointed',—or, when they spoke in Greek, 'the Christ'—would, they believed, soon come to free them from the tyranny of the heathen-alien Roman and to set up the Rule of God over the world, reigning in Jerusalem on the throne of King David.

So the Wise Men asked: 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?'

They were learned men, but one thing at least they did not know when they innocently asked that question. They did not know that they were setting fire to dry thorns.

'He that is born King of the Jews!' Of all possible news, this was the word to strike fear and wrath in the heart of the man who was at that moment 'the King of the Jews', the fierce, old, blood-stained despot, Herod the Great. This news, too, was what every Jewish ear tingled to hear and every tongue was eager to repeat.

[1] Or 'as it rose'. Not 'in the East', as in the English Authorized Version. In 7 B.C. Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction in the constellation Pisces. This only happens once in 800 years. It recurred three times in that year. Jesus' birth (see Appendix) probably took place between 5 and 8 B.C.

What did 'new-born King' mean for Herod? Where should a 'King of the Jews' be born save in his palace and of his family? How had Herod become 'King of the Jews'? How had he reigned?

Soon after the death of Julius Caesar, Herod, then a young prince in his early thirties, went to Rome. There he was made King of Judaea by a decree of the Roman Senate itself. He came back, and, fighting his way through the land, wrested Jerusalem from the ruler who then held it. He reigned over the Jews for thirty-seven years dating from the decree of the Senate, or some thirty-four years from his taking of Jerusalem. Herod, part-Jew as he was, tried again and again to win the friendship of his Jewish subjects; but his real aim was always to stand well with Rome. He began to build, a few years before Jesus was born, a new, more majestic and splendid Temple than even Solomon's had been. He ruined the effect of that generous act, however, maddening the Jews by setting up over the very portico of the Temple of God what was to them a blasphemy—the Roman eagle moulded in bright gold.

The devout Jews loathed, too, the Greek theatre that Herod built in their holy city. They hated, as a heathen outrage, the amphitheatre he made there, and his luxurious citadel-palace where Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, had visited him. Commanding the lives of thousands of slaves and extorting taxes from the Jewish people, King Herod reared other powerful castles at Sebaste in Samaria, at Tiberias in Galilee, at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, as well as above Jericho in the Jordan valley, and at Herodium by Bethlehem. At Caesarea Palestina on the coast, he made the most wonderful of his works, the harbour with its mole stretching all across the bay. Never before or since has such a harbour been made on the open, shelterless coast of Palestine.[1] Never before or since have such superb palaces, castles, theatres, and temples been raised on the hills of that

[1] For description see Chapter XIV.

land. With those castles garrisoned with soldiers, Herod held the Jewish nation firmly in his iron grip, although they squirmed and cursed at the taxes that he made them pay to meet the cost of his buildings. Yet Herod the Great gave lavishly in a time of famine. He was the true despot, magnificent in building, often generous by whim or by policy, but cruel and suspicious, luxurious and lustful, and, above all, crafty.

Herod played the jackal to the lion, Rome. He hunted for his master, the Emperor, bringing in taxes and trade from the people for Rome, and, jackal-like, looked always to his powerful lord for protection in danger. His whole soul was set on power. He bullied the very Sanhedrin itself—the powerful national council of the Jews—overawing them with his brutal soldiery, and butchered Jewish priests like sheep. He put men and women to torture. Suspecting his wife, Mariamne, of plotting against him, half-maddened with fear and suspicion, he killed her. For the same reason he put two of his own sons to death. To hold his rule over the land against all odds till he died, and then to leave it to his family as their estate, he would stop at no cruelty. Herod had spies everywhere, and especially in the city inns where strangers gathered and men talked around the fire. One of those spies hurried to Herod with the story of the Magi. So now in his ears rang the most infuriating question that could be put to him: 'Where is the new-born King of the Jews?'

A baby was born—these Magi said—who, if the stars spoke truly, was to be king. Very well—Herod would fight the stars in their courses.

'Bring to me the chief priest and his scholars,' he rapped out.

Led into his presence, the priests faced the strong, proud, yet crafty and suspicious old ruler, now nearing seventy years of age.

'Tell me,' he said, 'where do your prophets say that the "Anointed" is to be born?'

These white-bearded scholars of the Law knew the words of Micah, their prophet, by heart, for they had repeated them a thousand times in their discussions.

'He will be born', they replied, 'in Bethlehem in Judaea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

> ' "And thou, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
> Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah:
> For out of thee shall come a governor,
> Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel." '

Herod had now heard all that he needed to know from them. He dismissed them, and sat there brooding. He called another of his officers.

'Go,' he said, 'and bring these Magi to me. But,' he added craftily, 'bring them privately so that no one shall know.'

'You seek the new-born King of the Jews,' he said, when they entered. 'I can tell you in what city you will find him. Go to Bethlehem. Search out carefully concerning this young child. When you have found him there, bring me word, so that I also may come and do him reverence.'

The Magi turned and left the palace. Gathering together the gifts that they had brought from their homeland for the new King, they mounted their camels and, urging the grumbling beasts to their reluctant feet, started out, south-south-west, along the six miles of road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Even their calm was moved by the thrill of nearing the goal of their long quest. The light, as it always seems when men are moving towards a star, went before them. They rejoiced with great joy when, at last, they found the house in which Mary and Joseph were with their child, now some months—maybe even a year—old.

Going in at the door, the Wise Men saw the young mother in the simple room smiling into the face of the baby boy, while Joseph stood beside them. An awe came over the Magi that had never touched their spirits as they had talked with Herod in his palace. They went down upon their knees

and bowed their foreheads to the floor. Then, opening the treasures that they had carried with them all the way from the East, they held out gifts to the child.

The gifts were gold and frankincense and myrrh: symbolical of placing at the baby-boy's feet the things men hold most dear—wealth, worship, and healing. The gold that was laid before the child was their most precious metal. It came to the East from the mines of Africa, dug up and refined by Negro labour. The frankincense stood for adoration. It is a gum that comes from the toil of Indian hands and is secured by slitting the bark of a resinous tree in Central India. The fragrant sap was gathered in globules in these incisions. This was carried up the passes through the Afghan mountains and through Persia to the Roman Empire. The myrrh, a bitter, pungent, healing gum from a small flowering shrub that grows in the desert areas of Arabia and Somaliland, was one of the most valued of medicines of the East.

So the Wise Men, their worship being paid to the baby-boy, Jesus, rose and left the house. Going to the Bethlehem inn to sleep, they were visited by a dream. They interpreted the dream to mean that they must not go back to Jerusalem to tell Herod where they had found the child. So they started quietly away from Bethlehem and took the eastern path. Ominous and threatening, Herod's castle hung over them on its hill-top east of Bethlehem. Their camels stumbled swiftly across desert places, all loose sand and tawny rock. The path then broke down along a boulder-strewn, bone-dry ravine of the wilderness that at last broadened into the Jordan valley. The camels, having forded the Jordan, breasted the steep, rocky ways up to the high Eastern land now well beyond the reach even of Herod's long arm and heavy hand.

CHAPTER III

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT

MEANWHILE Joseph was pondering the secret flight of the Magi from Herod. Then he, too, dreamed his dream.

'Rise up!' the word came to him in his sleep, 'Take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to return. For Herod will try to find the young child, to destroy him.'

Joseph bestirred himself. Herod's new fortress-palace on the ridge near to Bethlehem was so close to them that in an hour the despot could strike. Once Herod knew that the Magi had mocked his commands, his fury would know no bounds. There was no time to lose.

Getting food for the journey, Joseph folded the mats for the saddle, set Mary on the back of the animal, and placed Jesus in her arms.

They were already six miles south-south-west of Jerusalem on the road to Egypt. This was all to the good. The roads, in fact, forked from Bethlehem on two routes, either of which they could take for Egypt. One kept on the ridge southward to Hebron and then sloped down the hills south-westward to Beersheba. The other ran west from Bethlehem down towards the Great Sea and then pitched south-westward to the sea-plain at Gaza.[1] From Gaza and from Beersheba alike caravan routes ran westward across the desert to the Nile.

While it was still night they started over one of these routes. Mary's arm may well have ached with the boy's weight, as hour after hour, all through the night, they moved on. Jesus slept, all unconscious of the hurried flight, as he rested warm and safe in his mother's arms in woollen wraps spun and woven from the sheep of the hills.

[1] See map. A good map of Palestine open before the reader all the time while reading will make the journeys of Jesus much more real.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

'The child rested warm and safe in his mother's arms.'

PLATE III

As dawn came up over his left shoulder, Joseph looked ahead over the land and found a quiet refuge and resting-place in which to hide during the day. There they got strength for the next night's journey. Trailing down to Beersheba or to Gaza, they got food and drink for the desert trail and faced the perilous sea of blown sand and rock. Here and there in the desert was an oasis with its little pool and its cluster of date-palms and huts, like an emerald set in some vast shield of dull gold. As the moon rose, Mary and Joseph, with the child, started out to take the journey westward over the desert. For weeks they were away from the life of men. At night a rough desert rock-wall, made to protect travellers from sand-storms, was all their shelter. The road was simply the track of the camels and the donkeys in the ever-shifting sands.

Jesus and his parents were now out of reach even of Herod. They could travel by day. They passed from the rolling sand dunes of the desert to the flat delta of the Nile. Here heavy-shouldered, mud-grey, long-horned buffaloes drew little ploughs through the rich black silt of Father Nile. There a blindfolded donkey marched round and round all day in one weary circle of mud, drawing from the well the buckets that tilted the water into little channels to irrigate the farmer's crops. Yonder a group of brown Egyptian children stopped their play for a moment to look at the beautiful oval face of the young mother on the donkey and to wish that they could see the child in her arms carefully wrapped away from the glare.

At last on the horizon Joseph saw, sharply outlined against the afternoon sky, a square mass of Egyptian temples and houses. It was the City of the Sun—Heliopolis. As they came through the gate of the city, Joseph asked the way to the quarter where the Jews lived. Here he could find not only a room or two in which they could live, but with carpenter's tools he could work and earn food and clothing for Mary and her son.

A messenger, meanwhile, had galloped up the road from Bethlehem to tell Herod in Jerusalem that the Magi had defied his will by coursing homeward without telling him where the new-born child lay. He was thrown into superstitious terror by the prophecy that this child was born to become 'King of the Jews'. His mind was a jungle crawling with snakes of suspicion. Frenzied with anger and dread, he decided to strike swift and straight at the life of the child.

Herod's blow fell. Even while Mary and Joseph with the boy-baby were fleeing down the defiles of the hills, Herod sent soldiers post-haste along the six miles of road to Bethlehem on their horrible errand. From house to house they went, not only in Bethlehem, but along the paths and hill-sides round about the town. Every boy under two years old was killed. Their mothers wept and would not be comforted.[1]

Herod's end, however, was near. Only some months of life were left to him. He fell ill of an incurable disease. He went down across the Jordan valley east of the Dead Sea to a place called Callirhoë, where hot, sulphurous waters gush from the earth. The baths did Herod no good. While he was there, a body of Jewish students, young, enthusiastic followers of two teachers named Judas and Matthias, went to the Temple in Jerusalem and climbed its new gateway. They hacked down the golden eagle that Herod had put on the portico of the Holy Place of the invisible God. Furious at this defiance, the dying king commanded that he should be carried back to Jerusalem. There he ordered fires to be kindled. Judas and Matthias with forty-two of their student followers were cast into the flames.

One of Herod's sons, Antipater, had, meanwhile, gone to

[1] Unconscious confirmation of this story is given by Macrobius, a pagan Roman writer of the end of the third century, who recounts a pun made by the Emperor Augustus when he heard of a massacre of children under two years old by Herod's order in Syria. Taking the population as recorded by writers of that period and the average number of boy-babies of two years and under, it is computed that the number killed was about thirty.

Rome to present his father's will to the Emperor. Antipater, however, was plotting Herod's death there. Herod heard of this. He wrote Antipater a most loving letter urging him to come home to his father. When Antipater arrived, Herod threw him into prison. Then Herod sent word to Augustus the Emperor, asking permission to put his own son to death.

The news that Herod was dying went like wildfire through the country. It was impossible to curb the joy of the people at the hope of being rid of their cruel tyrant. Spies told the dying king this, and it drove Herod frantic. He sent orders through the land that the chief men of the towns and villages should be taken and led down to the vast marble hippodrome at Jericho that glittered there in the sunshine of the spring.

'When I die,' he said grimly, 'kill them all. Then let us see if there will be any rejoicing at my death!'

Herod himself went down to his palace in Jericho. As he lay there in his weakness, news came that Antipater had tried to escape from prison. A messenger, however, hastened in with a scroll from Rome. Opening it, Herod read the permission of Augustus the king to execute his son.

'Kill him,' gasped the old king, now in the last stages of weakness. The sword flashed and young Antipater was dead. It was the final evil deed in Herod's seventy years of life. Five days later he died. It was in the springtime, just before the great Feast of the Passover. No one carried out his command to kill the men in the Jericho hippodrome.

Away across the hills and the desert, in Egypt, Joseph was working with plane and saw. His thought and that of Mary often turned to the homeland among the Palestine hills. They looked at their boy, who was growing daily and learning the use of eyes and hands and feet. While Herod still ruled in Judaea, however, they could not return to their native land. At last news came that Herod was dead. Joseph dreamed that a Messenger from God came to him.

'Arise,' he said to Joseph, 'and take the young child and

his mother and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead that sought the young child's life.'

Eagerly Mary and he made their preparations to go. They said 'Good-bye' to the new friends whom they had made in Egypt and turned their faces eastward and northward. Jesus was now from two to three years old. He looked about eagerly, watching the life all around him on the journey; the Egyptians hoeing in the fields, the bullocks drawing the ploughs, the donkeys almost hidden under the ricks of fodder strapped on their backs; then the desert with the endless stretches of blown sand. Perhaps he was old enough for his father to tell him the story of how—in the days long ago—Moses led the Israelites, the Jews, to which nation Jesus belonged, out of slavery. Moses led them out of Egypt, Joseph told Jesus, across that desert into freedom in the land of Canaan that was now to be Jesus' home. When they had crossed the desert and began to climb the hills of Judaea, Joseph talked with the folk whom they had met in Gaza and on the way, to hear the news of the homeland.

'Herod Archelaus is reigning in Judaea in the place of his father, Herod,' they said. 'He is on the way to Rome now to get the Emperor's permission to be king. But just before he was to start, rebels raised their banner against him in Jerusalem. There were thousands of pilgrims in the city, for it was the time of the Passover. So the soldiers of Archelaus stormed through the streets, sword in hand, massacring the people till the stones ran with blood. Three thousand people were killed.'

Joseph was troubled in his mind. It did not look really safe even now to pass through the land. He was glad to think that Archelaus was the ruler over Judaea only, and that his authority did not stretch northward to that part of Palestine called Galilee, where Joseph longed to re-make his home in a little hill-town called Nazareth. Once more decision came to him through a dream and he turned his face toward Galilee. The Way by the Sea led up from the desert

along the narrow Philistine sea-plain from Gaza to the broadening Plain of Sharon. The road then wound past the brilliant pagan city of Caesarea Palestina, with its new harbour that Herod had built and its amphitheatre and hippodrome. Half a day's walk farther north it curved round the narrow strip of coast under the lion-headed bluff of Mount Carmel and came out by the sandy beach of the lovely Bay of Acca.

There the road swung inland. Jesus could see for the first time the long ridge of Mount Carmel and the rocky shoulder of that great hill with its spring and its flat rock where, his parents told Jesus, Elijah had built his altar and brought down by his prayers the fire of heaven. Even the small boy could, with a hand to help him, walk over the stepping-stones of the ford of the little River Kishon, which, on that long-ago day, had run red with the blood of the prophets of Baal.

From this point they climbed the paths of the low hills that are the first step to the hills of Galilee.

Leaving on their right the Plain of Esdraelon, where the later harvest was by now in full swing, they went along the curving paths that grew steeper and steeper into the highlands. Then, at last, at a bend of the road, Jesus saw at sunset, for the first time, the flat roofs and the narrow streets of the little town in which he was to live through all his boyhood. It lay among the hills, a cup brimming with golden light, as Joseph, Mary, and Jesus went down together into Nazareth.

PART II

THE BOY

CHAPTER IV

THE HILL-CITY HOME

THE small hill-city, Nazareth, to which Jesus came, was among the hills of Galilee that rise north and east of the Plain of Esdraelon, between the Great Sea—the Mediterranean—and the Jordan valley. Nazareth lay there among sloping olive-groves, fig-orchards, and vineyards. The square, flat-roofed little houses climbed the north-eastern side of the hills. Jesus and his parents went down this hillside[1] and threaded their way through the narrow, winding street. The last customers of the day were chaffering with the merchants, who sat cross-legged behind their goods in the little booths open to the passer-by.

At last the three travellers stopped at a small, square stone house[2] with a courtyard at the side and stone steps up the outside of the wall. These steps led to the flat roof, which rested on rough-hewn timber beams, morticed together in a strong square frame with cross-beams. Across these beams lathes, sticks, brushwood, and thorns were laid. They were then covered with mud and clay, beaten hard and flattened with a stone roller.

Joseph opened the wooden door of the house. Mary with her boy went into the one room that was both living-room and bedroom. Filling a little earthenware hand-lamp with oil from a jar in a niche of the wall, she lighted its wick. Joseph brought in the mats that had served Mary as a saddle. Quickly neighbours came hurrying in to greet them, and to exclaim with delight at seeing their son, Jesus. They ate

[1] The ridge is 1,650 feet above sea-level. The Mediterranean is twenty miles away due west. Nazareth at its lowest point—the public threshing-floor on bare rock—is 1,155 feet above sea-level, and 1,485 feet at the highest point reached by the houses on the slope of this hill.

[2] The houses of the working people were often built of mud mixed with straw, especially on the plain where stone is scarce; but among these limestone hills they were more often built of rough-hewn stone.

their supper, said an evening prayer, and then unrolled the mat-beds and soon were fast asleep.

It was Jesus' first night in the home where he was to grow into an older boy and then a young man.

In the morning Mary took a tall, empty pitcher and, placing a small round pad on her head, set the pitcher there and started to walk with Jesus down the street. They came to a spring where the water gushed out of the rock, brawling and gurgling down the valley. By this spring were several older girls and young mothers chattering like birds in the morning sunshine. The language that Mary and all the common people in Galilee talked was called Aramaic, closely related to Hebrew. The well was a place to which everybody came, for it was the one source of fresh water in Nazareth. Early every morning and in the late afternoon the girls and young women came and went, bearing away the water.[1]

Mary, after talking with some of her friends, put her filled water-jar on her head. Balancing it there, she walked with quiet, graceful steps along the way homeward. Jesus trotted alongside, taking in all the sights and sounds of the life of Nazareth.

As a boy it was through the things that he saw his mother and Joseph do, and the stories that they told him about the life of his land in the old days, that Jesus increased in knowledge while his body grew stronger and taller. Indeed, when he became a man, he used the things that he had seen as a boy at home to make his teaching so simple and clear and so full of pictures that everybody could remember.

He saw his mother go to what looked like a hole in the wall, plugged with a piece of wood. She held a measure under the hole and took out the wood. Barley grains came pouring out and filled the measure with enough grain for the loaves for that day. For this hole was at the bottom of the side of a tall, hollow bin built with dried earth and straw into the wall itself. This bin held the family store of grain.[2]

[1] See Pl. VI. [2] See Pl. I.

'They began to turn the stone round and round.'
Women in Nazareth grinding grain.

Mary then went outside the house into the courtyard and sat down on the ground by a small stone mill. This mill was made of two flat, circular stones about eighteen inches across, lying one on top of the other on the ground. An axle was fixed firmly upright into the top of the lower stone. This axle then went through a hole in the middle of the top stone. The top stone could thus be revolved on the axle jutting up from the lower one. The turning of the top stone was done by a wooden handle fixed into it. A neighbour came in and sat down with Mary. Each put one hand on this handle and they began to turn the stone round and round, while Mary, with her other hand—or sometimes a second neighbour—poured some grain into the hole in the middle of the top stone. Soon the flour, which was ground in this way from the grain, came trickling out all round between the edges of the two stones.

When the grain was all ground into flour, Mary gathered it up into a basin. Pouring out a little water from the jar into the basin, she mixed the flour into dough. Then she took a portion of yeast or leaven and thrust it into the dough. The fascinated boy watched as the little bit of leaven worked in the warm dough and made bubbles in it. These rose and rose so that the whole mass of the dough slowly heaved and the lump was lightened and sweetened by the working of the hidden yeast.

In a corner of the courtyard was a curious-looking oval mound like a gigantic thimble, taller than the little boy's mother. There was a small doorway in the side. It was made of baked mud and clay. This was the family bread-oven. Peering into this oven Jesus could see on its floor a very low, almost flat dome. It was covered with ashes. Under the ashes was a curved lid with a small upright stick for a handle in the middle of the top.

Mary, stooping and going inside the oven, covered this low dome with a layer of fuel made of dried dung and of gathered grass and little, resinous, thorny shrubs. She set fire

to this and came out of the oven. The fire glowed and grew hotter and hotter. At last, in about an hour's time, the fuel had all burned away to grey ash. Mary then went in again and raked away all the ash from the top of the dome with a wooden scraper. Seizing the handle, she lifted off the big lid that formed the top of the low dome. Inside the hollow under the lid at the bottom were pebbles, potsherds, and bits of tile. These were now very hot.

Mary, crouching down, picked up a lump of the now leavened dough from a flat, round straw tray, and dusted it with dry flour from a little straw basket. She dusted the dough with the flour to keep it from sticking to her hands. Jesus watched her as she patted it from hand to hand, till at last it was flat and circular, and about the thickness of a pancake. Then she slapped it down into the oven on to the sherds at the bottom. So she did with several loaves and put the lid on again. She waited for a short time. Then, having taken off the lid, she, with a swift, deft movement, lifted out the loaves, now ready to be eaten. He found it good to taste. His mother told him that it was the leaven that had made it so pleasant to eat, by working not from outside, but silently, strongly, inside the dough, changing its nature.

They had cheese to eat with their bread, and olives from the grey old trees in the shade of whose green leaves Jesus played. He sat to rest with his back against the strong, gnarled trunks. Dates, too, they munched, carried to Nazareth on the backs of camels; and fresh figs from the beautiful trees, with their smooth, silvery branches and rich green leaves.

The olives were preserved with salt. This salt was brought up the hills of Galilee to Nazareth on the backs of donkeys from the great rock-salt cliffs, over thirty feet high, that run along for a length of more than six miles beyond the lower end of the Jordan valley, south-east of the Dead Sea. This salt Mary used not only for preserving some foods, but for bringing out their full flavour. Sometimes, however, she

found that—owing to damp or from some other cause—the salt had lost its savour. Then she threw it out to be trampled under foot.

After the meal was over, the few simple dishes from which the food was eaten had to be washed. It was easy to make the dish look clean outside, but not to trouble much about the inside. Jesus noticed then what his mother said about it being wrong to wash the outside of the cup and platter and leave the inside soiled.

Other children were born in the home, James, Jude, and Simeon, and two girls whose names we do not know.

It happened—how often it seemed to happen!—that one of the boys' tunics had a piece torn out of it. Their mother prepared to mend it. A boy would naturally think that all would be well if she cut a piece of new cloth the size of the rent and stitched it into the old coat. The cloth, however, was all made of wool that had been taken from the backs of sheep on the hills of Nazareth—wool that was combed and cleaned, spun, and then woven into cloth by the Nazareth weaver himself. Wool clothing, the mother explained, shrinks when it is washed. If you sew a piece of new cloth into an old garment, she said, the new part when the rain came down on it, or when it was washed, would shrink and pull away from the old. So it was best to use a piece of old cloth for patching a garment or else to shrink the new by washing it first.

There were other clothes, however, put away in the strong chest that Joseph had made—wedding garments brought out on special occasions, some of them with fine silver ornaments to them. The chest must be kept closely shut, the boys and girls were told. Otherwise silvery 'fish-moths' would get in and lay eggs in the garments, from which maggots would be hatched that would eat holes in the beautiful cloth. The air, too, would tarnish the metal embroidery. A thief might break in in the absence of the family and steal the precious things. If there were only some place where

neither moth nor rust could eat away your treasured goods, nor thieves break in and steal!

For Jesus' family was not rich. They had enough to eat, enough to wear, and a roof over their heads: but there were no luxuries. Every denarius had to be earned by Joseph's labour with his plane and saw and hammer. Mary had a string of silver Greek coins, called drachmae. They went across her forehead as a part of the beautiful headdress that her mother gave her when she was married. One day one of the ten silver coins came loose and was lost. She was distressed and told her neighbours of her loss. The room was so dimly lighted that you could not find a small thing like a coin that rolled into a corner. So she lighted her little lamp, took her brush of twigs and swept diligently until at last the flame from the lamp glinted on the silver. Then she was so glad that she called her neighbours, and told them to rejoice with her, for she had found that which was lost.

So Jesus in the home—to quote Luke's summary of these years—'increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man'. He played with other boys, and learned to make things with his hands.

All the time his mind was working. As he grew from a small boy into an older boy new thoughts sprang up in him. He often sat on the roof of the house in the cool of the evening and sometimes into the night under the star-strewn sky, thinking. He saw more and more, in the common happenings of the home, pictures of the ways of God as a Father in the world of his children. He saw good men and women like salt preserving the world; he saw the wonders of the care of God in making so beautiful the waving grass that to-day was growing on the hillside and yet to-morrow would be cast into the oven to bake the bread. He came to see that, as with the cup and plate, so with man's life, the inside—the heart and mind—should be as clean as the outside; and, still later, that fresh truth might tend to destroy rather than to mend an outworn garment of ideas. He saw that the real riches were

not in the family cedar-wood chest, but were the treasures of one's very spirit and character given by God, treasures in a place where no rust nor moth could corrupt, and no thief could break through and steal.

The day would come when Jesus would draw from these things that he had seen in his home the power to make the deepest mysteries and greatest truths clear to simple people; the day when he himself would thrust into the world immortal leaven, to change and sweeten the life of boys and girls, of men and women, everywhere.

CHAPTER V

THE HILLS AND THE HOUSE OF GATHERING

THE hills above Nazareth were the playground of Jesus while he was a growing boy. He watched the birds and beasts and flowers on those hills—things that every country boy or girl sees—and from them he painted later on the fascinating word-pictures in which he gave his immortal teaching. Jesus noticed the hungry birds fly down into the field behind the sower and snatch up the seed that he had just thrown on to the soil. He saw the ploughman who, having put his hand to the plough, turned away and slept under a tree and so failed to get his field ready, or looked back to speak to some one and so ploughed a crooked furrow and ran his ploughshare into a boulder. He watched the corn as it grew; first the blade and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. He felt the wind whipping his tunic about his bare knees, blowing where it listed and making running waves over the bending corn—though whence it came or whither it went no one could tell.

He loved the scarlet blaze of anemones, so brilliant in the sunshine that the eyes were dazzled, and their mauve and white neighbours, the nodding companies of wild cyclamen. A month later, he saw the trumpeting armies of poppies, with their pale yellow companion the scabious—called 'owl-eyed' from the shape of the seed-vessels when the flower is gone. They were all, he was sure, dressed in more lovely raiment than had ever adorned King Solomon in all his glory.

He noted the birds' nests in the trees; and in the short twilight caught the flash of a fox galloping from his lair under a broken rock. So he saw that even the foxes and the birds have their homes; that, although the birds did not build barns, nor sow, nor reap, yet God looked after them, while the flowers on the hills, that did not spin or do any work, were gloriously dressed by the Eternal.

THE GRAIN-MERCHANT AT NAZARETH

'The merchant took his measure and filled it with grain—good measure, shaken down, pressed together and running over.'

As the boy Jesus ran over the hills, he heard the shepherd call his sheep by name, and they followed him; but when a hired man from another part of the land called them, so far from following him, they actually ran away, for they did not know the stranger's voice. Talking with the shepherds on the hills, he learned the lore of the weather. The red dawn came up across Jordan over the hills of Decapolis and the sirocco blew up from the Arabian desert, heralding drought and heat and the withering of leaves; but, when the south-west wind blew across Mount Carmel, which lay between Nazareth and the sea, it would not be long before the rain clouds came up across the bay. On his way home the boy stood lost in eager attention by the side of a friendly vine-dresser, who, knife in hand, pruned away branches that bore no fruit and grafted new shoots into the vine, so that the sap of the vine could flow through the branches and they would bear good fruit.

Each bird and beast, each flower and tree, every wild animal and flock of sheep, was an entrancing picture in itself to Jesus. And in the innermost heart of each picture the boy saw the working of the love of his Father, who made them all, the God whose joy it is to give his children life.

So, tightening his girdle and his sandal-straps, he stepped lightly down the hill-side. As he came among houses, Jesus saw, too, in the workshops of Nazareth other things that wove themselves into the tapestry of his thinking.

In the open market-place was a heap of grain with the corn-merchant seated on the ground beside it, while customers fingered the barley and haggled over the price. A man decided to buy. The merchant took up his measure and filled it with the grain, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.[1] As he measured that grain out, thought Jesus, God will lavish forgiveness on him.

[1] The author has on different occasions stood watching the corn-merchant in Nazareth by his heap of grain. He always measures out in the way described by Jesus (Luke vi. 38).

In this same market-place some boys and girls were playing. The voices of some of them grew shrill and angry.

'We shall not play any more,' they said to the others; 'we have whistled merry tunes and you won't play at weddings; we have sung a dirge and you won't play at funerals. It's useless to try to play with you.'

On the door-post of Jesus' home a folded parchment was fixed. Jesus' father touched it with his fingers every time that he went out of the house or came in, and then put to his lips the fingers that had touched the parchment. On it, Joseph showed Jesus, these words are written:

'Hear, O Israel:
The Lord our God is one Lord:
And thou shalt love the Lord thy God
With all thine heart,
And with all thy soul,
And with all thy might.'

These verses are called the 'Shema' because Shema is the Hebrew word for 'Hear' or 'Listen', with which the verses begin. Joseph quoted the wonderful sentences in the book of Deuteronomy that include the Shema and end with:

'And thou shalt write these words
Upon the posts of thy house,
And on thy gates.'

He went on to repeat God's commandment that these words must be taught to all boys and girls.

'Ye shall teach them your children,
Speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house,
And when thou walkest by the way,
When thou liest down,
And when thou risest up.'

These same words were written on another parchment and put into a leather case which was often bound on Jesus' arm as a boy. Joseph had one strapped on his forehead. This was

called a phylactery. The words were so carried, in order that a boy or man should always be reminded of the truth that God is Lord of all the world. Some men, however, who made a great show of their religion, had large cases made for the parchment; they made broad their phylacteries, not for worship of God, but to be thought much of by men.

Jesus, from the age of about eight years old, or even younger, went each day down the village street to learn at the feet of a teacher sayings from the Sacred Scrolls on which the Shema was written. Every father among the Jewish people was responsible for teaching his boys the Law delivered by Jehovah to Moses. Many fathers were too busy earning a livelihood for their families to have time to do this. So the custom grew up of asking one man to take charge of the education of the boys of several families, each father paying him something.[1]

The eight- to ten-year-old Jesus, then, sat on a sanded floor, cross-legged, with other boys of his own age. The teacher, too, sat cross-legged, but on a slightly raised platform in front of the boys. He had a rather long stick or wand in his hand. Stretching it out, he wrote an Aramaic letter in the sand on the floor in front of the boys with the point of the stick. The boys, watching him, traced the same letter with a finger in the sand. They then all shouted together the sound for which the letter stood. In that way, without paper or pencil or desk, Jesus learned to read and to write.

Then the teacher, either from memory or with a Scroll of the Law unrolled before him, repeated a sentence of the Law. For instance, the teacher would say:

> 'The land whither ye go over to possess it
> Is a land of hills and valleys
> And drinketh water of the rain of heaven;

[1] A few years later a famous Rabbi organized schools attached to the meeting-houses (or synagogues) of the Jews all through the towns of Galilee. When Jesus was a boy, however, this had not been done.

A land which the Lord thy God careth for;
The eyes of the Lord are always upon it,
From the beginning of the year
Even unto the end of the year.'

Jesus, with the other boys, would then repeat together aloud these lovely thoughts about his native land. In this way the boys learned the Ten Commandments and many other teachings of the Law. The stories written in the Sacred Scrolls came alive in Jesus' imagination most of all when he heard his parents tell them to him after supper with the light of the flickering lamp throwing strange shadows on the walls; or when resting through cool summer evenings on the roof-top. He listened eagerly to the adventures of the boys of his race. He heard of the boy Isaac walking with his father, Abraham, up the mountain side to the rock of sacrifice.

'My father,' Isaac cried, 'behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?' Isaac was to be the lamb of sacrifice, but he was suddenly delivered by the goat caught in the thicket, which was sacrificed in his place. The quarrels and reconciliations of Isaac's sons, young Esau and Jacob, came next—the one a stormy-tempered, red-haired roamer of the deserts for game, the other a cool-blooded, ambitious shepherd. Then seventeen-year-old Joseph was sold as a slave to the Arabs as they went with their camel-caravan through the valleys southward to Egypt. The youngest brother, Benjamin, journeyed down with the older ones to Egypt years later on. Great was the excitement of the unexpected meeting with Joseph, now become Prime Minister in Egypt. The boy Moses, too, brought up on the banks of the Nile in the home of Pharaoh's daughter, grew to lead his people out of slavery into freedom. On the hills by the sea the strong boy, Samson, grappled with the lion-cub. How different was the boy Samuel who listened to the voice of God in the silence of the Temple at night. The comradeship of the boys David and Jonathan drew Jesus; and the heart of any boy is stirred as he hears the story of how—still

a shepherd-boy—David slew a lion and a bear, and at last with his sling and stone felled Goliath the giant.

These were some of the boys of Jesus' race who became leaders—prophets and warriors, statesmen and kings. What would Jesus become? As he listened on the roof-top the very air of the darkening sky was full of visions of what a boy could be and do.

Before sunset, on the sixth day of every week, Jesus heard a trumpet-blast ring across the roof-tops of Nazareth. Standing in the street before a building having a beautiful portico with Greek marble pillars, he could see the Hazzan of the House of Gathering standing on a parapet of the roof facing south towards Jerusalem.[1] A swift bustling to and fro began in hundreds of houses and in the bazaars. The three trumpet-calls told the folk of Nazareth that in half an hour the sun would set and the Sabbath would begin.[2] Before that moment every meal must be cooked; all games stopped; the boys' tunics must be mended; the carpenter must have put away his saw, chisel, and mallet; and the farmer and his men must have hung up the hoe, the pruning-knife, and the wooden plough.

The menfolk started out now for the Sabbath evening service at the Beth Kenicheta,[3] as Jesus learned to call the Synagogue in Aramaic.

When the father got home from the evening service, the family came to the door and they stood together in a group while Joseph, with the door still open, said a prayer. It was believed that Sabbath angels came from God into the home of good people; that, indeed, the Sabbath was like a bride

[1] The ruins of many synagogues of the first century in Galilee have these Greek porticoes. All except one face south, i.e. toward Jerusalem.

[2] The Sabbath begins on Friday evening and goes on till sunset on Saturday.

[3] The Hebrew word is Beth-hakeneseth. Both these words mean exactly the same as the Greek word used in the New Testament, from which we get our word 'synagogue', or in Latin *congregatio*, i.e. meeting together. It was used, first, of the group of people who met together—the congregation—then of the building in which they met.

coming into the house to take possession of it. So this prayer by the head of the household welcomed her in. The rite of 'Hallowing the Sabbath' followed. Taking up a cup of wine, very light wine made from grapes of the hill-sides and mingled with water, the father held it in his hands while he prayed that God might bless the Sabbath. 'God for it and God over it,' he said. He now handed the cup round to all, one after the other, the boys first. A jar of water with a small spout to it was then brought and held so that the water ran lightly down. Each held his hands under the running water, as cleansing himself in body as well as in soul for the Sabbath. After that they sat down together and broke bread as a family, eating their simple supper before going to bed.

Jesus and the other boys and the girls waited till the next morning before going to worship in the synagogue. Early in the day they went with their parents down the street. They walked together up the wide steps under the portico of the synagogue and entered the quiet, cool, dimly-lighted building. Jesus could smell the scent of fresh mint, plucked and scattered on the floor to sweeten the air. Two rows of pillars running from the back to the front of the building divided the Beth Kenicheta into three aisles. The people sat on the floor of the synagogue on mats.

Jesus, as he sat down, could see, facing him towards the middle of the building, a raised platform with a reading-desk on it. Against the end wall of the building was a curtain which recalled the veil in the Temple at Jerusalem that separated the people from the Holy of Holies. Behind this curtain was the Ark of the Sacred Scrolls. It was a cupboard containing the beautifully ornamented parchment scrolls on which were written the Law and the Prophets.[1]

In front of this platform and chest were seats facing the congregation. Those were the chief seats in the synagogue. It was an honour to have the right to sit in one of them. There sat the Elders and Leaders of the Jews in Nazareth.

[1] Practically the Old Testament section of the present Bible.

Already seated there was the Parnas, the Ruler of the Synagogue, bearded and grave, whose duty it was, not to conduct the service, but to choose the man who should lead it and others to read the portions of the Law appointed for the day.

Near him, Jesus saw the Shamas, the attendant, who had many duties. He looked after the building, saw that it was kept clean, and that there was plenty of olive-oil for the wicks to float upon in the lamps, spread the herbs on the floor, as well as tidied everything when the service was finished. There was no priest in the synagogue worship. For the priests were those who conducted the service of sacrifice of lambs or pigeons, which, for the whole Jewish world, was centred at Jerusalem in the Temple.

The floor of the synagogue was now crowded with Nazarene men and boys, along with a number of women and older girls. In the stricter Jewish synagogues the women and girls went apart in galleries; but in Galilee they were freer. The Hazzan led off the service with singing praises to God. The people joined together in a great response. The Hazzan, after singing:

'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth,'

chanted:

'O give thanks unto the Lord;
For he is good.'

Then the voices of the men and boys surged up in a wave of sound, the clear, ringing treble of the boys' voices rising sharply above the men's bass—all singing the response:

'For his mercy endureth for ever.'

Jesus stood up with the people, and they all repeated the Shema. A leader stepped forward, a man chosen for the day by the Ruler of the Synagogue to read out some prayers. The time then came for reading the Sacred Scrolls. Seven readers were chosen by the Ruler each Sabbath. Any one who could read Hebrew was qualified. The Hazzan went to the curtain over the Ark and, drawing it aside, he opened with

great reverence the doors of the cupboard. There stood the Scrolls, each protected in a beautifully decorated cylinder—a leather sheath, which was, in turn, wrapped round with a piece of linen.

As the Hazzan lifted out the Scroll for the day there was a stir and a quick movement of the people as they crowded round him to kiss the parchment and so show their reverence for the Law that came through Moses from Jehovah.

To-day the reading was from the book that Jesus loved—along with the Scroll of Isaiah—the best of all. It was the Scroll of Deuteronomy. Jesus learned much of that Scroll by heart as a boy, for he quoted it again and again in times of great peril and stress and strain. The seven readers, one by one, came up, kissed the Scroll, read the prescribed portion, and went back again into the crowd of worshippers. The reading of the Law was now finished for the day.

A portion was read from one of the Prophets. Quite often a boy was chosen to do this, if he had shown himself to be a good pupil. So Jesus himself was certainly called upon as a boy to read the Prophets in the synagogue at Nazareth.

A bearded and dignified Rabbi spoke about the words that they had read, explaining any difficulties and driving home the meaning to the people who faced him. Soon after this the service of the synagogue was over.

So through those lovely works of God, the flowers and birds and beasts; through these stories of God's familiar dealings with his people; and through the worship of the meeting-house, Jesus became more and more aware of a world in which God, who was the Father of them all, had led the Jewish people along strange paths to a wonderful destiny. How should a boy live and act to be worthy of that great heritage?

Jesus heard God's teaching to a boy as the family sang at home some of the loveliest poems ever written; songs that were to come back to him later in hard, difficult

days—the song of the shepherd, for instance;[1] or the one that begins:

'The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.
Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
Nor sworn deceitfully.
He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.'

More stirring, however, than all to Jesus' spirit, as he began as a boy to wonder about his future, were the trumpet-voices of the prophets, in such words as these:

'O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,
Get thee up into the high mountains;
O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem,
Lift up thy voice with strength;
Lift it up, be not afraid;
Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!
Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand,
And his arm shall rule for him:
Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.
He shall feed his flock like a shepherd;
He shall gather the lambs with his arm,
And carry them in his bosom,
And shall gently lead those that are with young.'

[1] Psalm 23.

CHAPTER VI

REBELS AND THE COMING PRINCE

ONE day when Jesus was about twelve years old some young men came storming into his father's workshop in great anger. 'Quirinius, the Roman Governor,' these young men cried, 'has ordered that we shall all be numbered.' The Emperor at Rome had, in fact, that year, ordered Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee to be directly governed by a Roman procurator, because the Jews hated the tyranny of Herod Archelaus; and the rulers, especially the party of the Pharisees, told Caesar that they would prefer to be ruled from Rome itself than through a tyrannical prince of the House of Herod. They were now to have a census taken.

'It is a sin,' said one. 'It is against the will of God, for when David numbered the people a plague broke out to punish him for his pride in counting to see how many men and women and children he had under his rule.'[1]

'It will be a scourge in the hand of the *publicani*,' growled a third. 'The tax-gatherers will use these facts to lay impossible loads on our shoulders. They will snatch from our purses the uttermost farthing.'[2]

So the young fellows went off growling and grumbling along the bazaar. In every village and town of Galilee—on the southern edge of which Nazareth stood—in fishing-smacks on the lake, in vineyards and cornfields, in olive groves and the booths of the coppersmiths and the leather-workers, hot-blooded young nationalist patriots gathered in knots to curse Rome and to swear revolt. Judas the Galilean raised the standard of revolt at Sepphoris. Jesus knew Sepphoris well. From the hill-top above his home this big town lay just over three miles away on the slopes of another hill. Along the camel-tracks from Cana and Nazareth,

[1] 2 Samuel xxiv.

[2] This was so. Quirinius ordered this census of Jews in A.D. 6 with a view to taxation. Jesus was born between 5 and 8 B.C.

Capernaum and Tiberias, Nain and Endor, the youth of the land went pouring into Sepphoris to gather round Judas the Galilean.

'No king save the Lord,' he cried. Ten thousand throats shouted the war-cry in response. They refused to bow the neck to the Emperor of Rome; they were ready to die for their faith that God willed the Jewish nation to be free from every alien yoke; free to obey the law of no king save God himself and his anointed Prince-Messiah. How were the ten thousand Galileans to arm themselves? Judas had an audacious plan. At the head of this multitude of youth he hurried across the high, rolling upland towards the Lake of Galilee and plunged down the steep escarpment to the level of the lake. On the lakeside was Tiberias, the new city over which the palace of Herod Antipas loomed. The mob of youth, overpowering Herod's guards, broke into the king's armoury. They seized spears and swords, shields and helmets. Thus armed, they went out to conquer the Romans and to free the land.

Eastward across the lake, however, on the hills above Gadara were the square encampments of the Romans. Legions[1] of soldiers lived there in the cool, crisp air, high above the feverish heats of the lake. The Roman general, Varus, at the head of his legions, marched against the furious revolutionaries. Like a mountain torrent in full spate, the Galileans poured themselves against the soldiers of Rome. Their fury foamed against the ranks of those grim, disciplined soldiers as vainly as waves crash against granite rocks. The Galileans broke and fled. Varus marched into Sepphoris, the head-quarters of the rebellion. He set fire to the town. That night Jesus, like every boy in Nazareth, went up to the hill-crest and saw, only three miles away, the awful sight of a whole city in flames. The sky was red as the blaze surged up. Next morning nothing was left of Sepphoris save black smouldering ruin. But harsher vengeance was to follow.

[1] A Roman legion contained up to 6,000 (never less than 3,000) men.

Varus rapped out his orders. The Roman soldiers herded the boys and girls, the men and women, of Sepphoris together and drove them like cattle over the hills and down to the sea-coast. They were forced on board ship. The anchors were weighed and the sails hoisted. So the Sepphoris Jews were carried away into exile to be sold as slaves. They lived, eating out their hearts in a strange land, digging in the gardens of Rome, hammering in the building yards of Alexandria, or as galley-slaves wrenching at the oars of a trireme, pulling in time with the drum-beats of the leader, under the scourge of a slave-driver. And two thousand young prisoners Varus crucified.

The boy Jesus, as he watched the flames of the burning city and heard these things talked about in the workshop, thought much about his native land and his nation. It was not as though the rebellion that he, as a boy, saw flame up under Judas of Galilee and quenched by Varus was an isolated, solitary outbreak. The Jews at that time were like a volcano seething with the boiling lava of revolution. Indeed, for seventy years before Jesus' birth, massacres and riots, wild rebellions and orgies of revengeful slaughter had bled the land. At least two hundred thousand Jews were slain in Palestine in battle or massacre during the hundred years that ended with Jesus' own death. Twelve thousand Jews were slain when Pompey captured the Temple and Jerusalem.[1] Six thousand were killed when that noble Jew, Aristobulus the Maccabee, was conquered. Ten thousand died fighting against the Romans under his son Alexander near Mount Tabor. Even when Aristobulus the Maccabee was captive in Rome, a Jewish general, calling on the people in Aristobulus' name, had gathered thirty thousand under his banner, and all the thirty thousand were captured and transported across the Roman Empire as slaves.[2]

Jesus soon found that what the rebels had feared after the census by Quirinius came true. New taxes were imposed.

[1] 63 B.C. [2] 51 B.C.

Joseph had to pay a poll-tax that was levied on every living person, including women and slaves. There was a percentage taken on every bunch of grapes and every shock of corn at harvest time; a percentage, too, on every sheep or lamb in the flock; every ox or cow or calf in the herd; on every shekel earned in the workshop. Joseph paid a water-tax, a city-tax, a tax on meat, a tax on salt, a house-tax and a road-tax. No wonder men asked, 'Shall we pay tribute to Caesar?'

The taxes were collected by the hated *publicani*, who paid a large sum to the Roman government for the right to collect the money and who therefore squeezed the uttermost farthing out of the wallets of the people in order to make themselves rich. 'Brigand', 'ruffian', 'robber', 'traitor'—these were some of the names that Jesus heard the infuriated people hurl at the 'publicans'.

'Why do we suffer all these things?' the rebellious young spirits asked.

'These troubles', answered a quiet old Rabbi who was against rebellion, 'are the footsteps of the coming of the Prince of God—the Messiah. He will come and will bring in the rule of God. His Kingdom shall be without end.'

'What will happen when the Messiah comes? What will he be like?' asked the Nazareth boys of one another.

'The vines', one boy replied, smacking his lips, 'will bear grapes all the year round and the figs will never stop growing. One grape, Rabbi Eleazar says, will be a load for a wagon and we shall be able to draw wine from it as if it were a cask. A single grain of wheat will be as large as the kidney of an ox.'

With eyes wide open the boys listened to these fantastic pictures of the wonderful Golden Age that was to come. The great centre, however, of all the stories of the future was the promise of the coming of the Prince. The Anointed King, the Messiah—the 'Christ'—sent by God, would come and reign on earth. That Kingdom under God's Messiah would make the Jews not only free from all other rule, but supreme among the peoples. When would the Prince come? No one

knew. But in those troubled days when Jesus was a boy this great hope of the Good Time coming—the Golden Age—was on the lips of every one.

What the Prince would be like no one knew. But there were many different ideas. Young rebels who followed Judas of Galilee said that the Messiah would come as a Warrior-Prince to put himself at the head of the Jewish people and sweep the Romans out of the land at the edge of the sword, backed by the power of the right hand of God; and so set up his throne on the hill of David in Jerusalem. A quite different picture was painted by Jesus' parents. The Prince would come, they said, to bring in the Reign of God—justice and mercy—in the hearts of men. Joseph quoted the words from the Scroll of Daniel:

'The God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom
Which shall never be destroyed,
Nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people;
But it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms
And it shall stand for ever.'

And again, several turns of the Scroll farther on:

'The Kingdom and the dominion,
And the greatness of the Kingdoms under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people of the Saints of the Most High:
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey him.'

To Jesus, however, the deepest and most wonderful thoughts came—and came with greater and greater meaning as he grew from year to year—when he heard those great messages from the Scroll of Isaiah:

'The people that walked in darkness
Have seen a great light:
They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them hath the light shined . . .
For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given,

And the government shall be upon his shoulder . . .
And his name shall be called Wonderful,
Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
There shall be no end,
Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,
To order it, and to establish it
With judgement and with justice
From henceforth even for ever.'

When would these things be? Jesus knew that the day must come; for he was sure with a knowledge that never dimmed that God was Father. For that same reason the Messiah, he knew, could not be a conquering warrior. Jesus quickened to the still lovelier note in the Isaiah Scroll about that Servant-Messiah:

'Behold my servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen in whom my soul delighteth;
I have put my spirit upon him:
He shall bring forth justice to the Nations.

'He shall not cry nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And the smoking flax shall he not quench.
He shall bring forth judgement with truth.
He shall not fail, nor be discouraged,
Till he have set judgement in the earth:
And the isles shall wait for his law.'

Till the deepest note of all moved the boy's heart:

'He was despised and rejected of men;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,
And as one from whom men hide their face.
He was despised, and we esteemed him not,
He shall see of the travail of his soul,
And shall be satisfied:
By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many:
For he shall bear their iniquities.'

Then at last the words came in that same glorious Scroll that opened a whole earth and heaven of task and achievement, and spoke to Jesus as no other words from the Scrolls ever spoke (and they spoke to him as they had never before spoken to any other boy)—words that in some wonderful way he knew were in a unique sense meant for him and he for them. For they painted for him the picture of what he would wish to do with his life in the world:

'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;
Because the Lord hath anointed me
To preach good tidings unto the meek;
He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
And the day of vengeance of our God:
To comfort all that mourn:
To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,
To give unto them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they might be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.
And they shall build the old wastes,
They shall raise up the former desolations,
And they shall repair the waste cities,
The desolations of many generations.'

CHAPTER VII

THE FEASTS OF THE YEAR

ONE evening in the middle of the winter, when the days were short, Joseph and Mary, with the help of Jesus, lighted every lamp in the home. They even took lanterns and lighted them on the roof. The boy could see the twinkling lights on the houses all up the hill-side. Young men marched down the streets waving blazing torches.

The next day Jesus saw the people hurrying through the streets with palm branches in their hands. They all went to the synagogue where they sang joyful songs and chanted the Hallel.[1] At home Joseph told the boys and girls the stirring story of how, over a century and a half earlier,[2] Judas Maccabeus, the fighting hero of the Jewish people, at the head of an army, destroyed the armies of their rulers, set up his throne in Jerusalem, and purified the old Temple in Jerusalem. For the Holy Place had been defiled by that alien tyrant, the Greek emperor, Antiochus Epiphanes. To celebrate this purification the Jews joined every winter for eight days in this 'Feast of the Dedication of the Temple', as it was called; although very often they named it 'the Feast of Lights'.

The boy Jesus enjoyed every year a number of other happy Festivals. In the early spring when the leaves were coming on the trees, they held the noisy, patriotic Feast of Purim, when they remembered how Queen Esther overthrew wicked Haman, who had plotted to wipe the nation of the Jews off the face of the earth. On one evening the Scroll of the story of Esther was read aloud in the synagogue.[3] When Haman's

[1] Psalms cxiii–cxviii.
[2] 164 B.C.
[3] In the Bible as the Book of Esther.

name was read out the boys and men burst into angry shouts, and the people stamped on the floor with wrath, cursing Haman, and shouting:

'Let his name be blotted out,
The name of the wicked shall rot.'

Loud were the cries of joy when the reader related how Xerxes, the Persian Emperor, after Queen Esther had begged the life of the Jews, ordered the death of Haman, saying: 'Hang him on the gallows that he put up for Mordecai'. After that every one went home to have a merry feast in honour of the patriot Queen Esther.

The greatest of all the Festivals came next. This was the Passover, with its Feast of Unleavened Bread. From all over the world of North Africa, Europe, and Asia innumerable Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate God's deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of the Pharaohs in Egypt. This feast was held in the first month of the Jewish year,[1] called the Month of Ears, because then the ears of wheat appear on the stalk. Every year Jesus as a young boy watched the pilgrims from Nazareth start towards Jerusalem for this Feast. Those who stayed at home ate the Passover Supper in their own houses. Then they fed on unleavened bread.

The Feast of the Passover comes at the beginning of the happy harvest time. The Passover falls in late March or early April. The barley harvest usually begins in Palestine in late April or early May. It comes very quickly after 'the latter rains' are over, the harvest of wheat following almost a month later, in early June. For weeks whole families go out to reap and garner the crops.

The boys enjoyed this open-air time in the harvest-field. At the end of those days, when faces were tanned by the sunshine, a happy festival of a single day was enjoyed. It was always held at the end of the wheat and barley harvest, fifty days after Passover. It was called the Feast of Weeks,

[1] Roughly March to early April.

or of Pentecost.[1] As a sheaf of wheat was offered before the Passover festival because that was the beginning of harvest, now two loaves were offered, because the grain harvest was ended.

For a boy, however, the most thrilling of all the feasts was the Feast of Booths[2] in early autumn, when the harvest of olives, grapes, and figs was over. Then the olive mills were set rolling. Donkeys pulled the great stones round and round to press out the oil, and the grapes were crushed in the vats. The boy Jesus at this holiday festival went gladly out with all the others. They all left home and marched, singing, up the hills into the vineyards and orchards to make huts of branches of trees. Under these they camped out in the open air. Jerusalem itself was disguised as a garden at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles; for there were huts of leafy branches on all the roof-tops where the people slept at night. During that Feast Jesus not only enjoyed himself with the family as they gave thanksgiving for harvest; but also called to mind the far-away days when the Hebrew people, coming back from Egypt, wandered for years through the desert, living in huts or 'tabernacles'.

So Jesus and all Jewish boys and girls celebrated through the year in these Feasts the goodness of God, in giving them the harvest of grain and fruit and the milk and clothing from flocks and herds, as well as in having led them through their long wanderings to their Promised Land and in giving them heroic leaders like Judas Maccabeus and Esther.

It came naturally to Jewish boys at those Feasts, and indeed at all times, to speak about God with their fathers and mothers. So Jesus and his parents talked of God together. God was to them not just an idea or a distant power. He was to the boy Jesus the invisible Spirit who made all things and

[1] Pentecost, from a Greek word meaning the fiftieth, i.e. the fiftieth day from the fourteenth of the month of Nisan or Passover. 'Weeks' because it was on the first day after four weeks from Passover.
[2] Or Tabernacles, or Huts.

was Love; the Creator who gave Jesus his home and friends; who spoke through his prophets the thoughts in the Sacred Scrolls; who ruled the sun, and moon, and stars; who radiated his warmth in the sunshine and moved in the wind on the hills; who cared for flowers and sparrows and found delight in boys and girls and little children—the Father whose nature and name is Love.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BOY ON THE OPEN ROAD

ONE spring morning when he was twelve years old, Jesus pulled back the wooden bolt of the door of his home. He stepped out into the open air. It was the dawn of the great day for which he had been waiting.

The city still lay in the cool shadow of the hills. Already, however, Jesus could see where the glow of the dawn made the rim of the tawny hills shine like old gold. Tilted on the slope of the north-western hill, Jesus' home faced the sunrise. The rays began to warm the white, flat roofs of Nazareth, and at last glinted on his home.

So long as he could remember, Jesus had been waiting for this day, and now it was here. He was going out on the trail to the South. To walk, to sleep in the open air, and to see the city that was for him and all the people of his nation the centre of the world; that was to be a great adventure.

At his thirteenth birthday Jesus, like all the boys of his race, would become 'a Son of the Law'. Joseph had told Jesus that all through the early years a Jewish boy's father is responsible for his keeping the Law. But at the age of thirteen the Rabbis accept the boy as 'a Son of the Law'. Then he himself becomes responsible. He steps over the threshold into a new world. It is the greatest day of a boy's life. To celebrate this in Jesus' time, a boy of thirteen went up to Jerusalem to the Passover Feast. As often happened, however, Jesus was to be taken by his parents rather earlier. He had now turned twelve.

Jesus in the street watched the people begin to bustle about. Ever since the thin, bright sickle of the Passover New Moon had appeared in the evening sky, Nazareth had been astir with these preparations. For the pilgrims must all be in

Jerusalem before the full moon of the Passover. They would be fully three days on the road to Jerusalem and three days coming back, with the days of Remembrance of the Passover in the city also. Mary put the food into the wallets. Joseph, helped by Jesus, built up on the donkey's grey back the saddle made of sleeping-mats, so that mother could ride easily upon them.

For a boy of twelve years old it was a long walk. More than eighty miles of stony winding track, up hill and down dale, lay between Nazareth and Jerusalem. But Jesus was a strong boy. Indeed, Joseph and Mary were proud of him as they watched him grow taller and sturdier as the days went by. It was his mother herself, surely, who said the words that so interested the doctor Luke, when they were repeated to him, that he wrote them down in his book—'The boy grew and waxed strong'. But there were other reasons, also, why Jesus was fit to go to Jerusalem to the great Feast of Remembrance; his mind and his spirit were also growing; for—Luke's informant went on to say—he was 'filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him'. Jesus was come to the age when a boy begins to feel new powers developing in him and can begin to take a line of his own.

When all was ready, Joseph and Mary and Jesus went down the Nazareth street towards the meeting-place. This was at the well-spring where the hill begins to rise. Already the place was crowded with people. Water-skins were being filled at the fountain and corded to the backs of mules and dromedaries along with cooking-pots and food-wallets. The voices of the men and women greeting their neighbours, the clattering hoofs of donkeys whose owners were hurrying not to be late, and the surly grunt of a camel rising to his feet, made a medley of sounds that fitted in with the excitement in the hearts of the boys. The beasts stooped round the fountain to take their fill of the good spring water before starting on the long trail. At last the signal to start was given, and, amid good wishes from the friends who stayed

THE VIRGIN'S WELL, NAZARETH

'The meeting-place of the caravan was at the well-spring.'

behind, and the wistful staring of the smaller boys, the caravan began to move.

Voices shrilled good-bye. The pilgrims waved their staffs. Donkeys brayed farewell to their fellows. The camels padded softly up the street, their quivering lower lips dribbling water. The dogs yapped. Babies, being carried to Jerusalem for their dedication, cried. The gaily-coloured head-wrappings, the rich brown cloaks, the tawny camels, the olive faces, made a beautiful picture as the slow-moving caravan curved and undulated between the square white houses now shining in the sharp light of the morning sun.

The boy Jesus had begun his eighty miles' walk from Nazareth to Jerusalem.

A boy asked a Rabbi as they climbed the hill road out of Nazareth—'How do we and all the people know when it is time to go down to Jerusalem?'

'When the beginning of the harvest is not two moons distant,' the old man answered, 'and the time of the new moon is drawing near, the priests at the Temple in Jerusalem watch the sky. Directly the first slim crescent of the new moon appears in the sky they send out running messengers north and south and east and west through the land to say, "This is the month of the Passover". In the old days, they used to light a beacon fire on the top of the mount at Jerusalem. Swiftly at this signal the beacon fires were lighted from hill to hill. So that from Beersheba away in the south by the desert of Egypt to Damascus by the deserts of the north men knew that the time had come to go up to Jerusalem. But the dogs of Samaritans, cursed be their name, who live over there in the hills between us and Jerusalem', and he pointed southward, 'sometimes lighted fires on their hills between us and Jerusalem in the wrong month in order to play a trick on us, and to make our pilgrims start at the wrong time. So now the message is passed by swift runners from Jerusalem all over the land.'

It was then full springtime when the caravan went along

that road out of Nazareth, the season when, as their own song said:

> 'The flowers appear on the earth,
> The time of the singing of birds is at hand.'

Suddenly, as they came round a bend in the rough winding road, Jesus saw stretched out in front of him, east and west and south, the broad, flat, open spaces of the Plain of Esdraelon. Other ways led across that plain from the north, from Damascus and other cities as well as from the Lake of Galilee. Jesus saw, far away down in the valley, thousands of pilgrims from far off along these roads, the camels and donkeys looking in the distance like processions of industrious ants.

When they had been walking for some hours and were getting tired and hungry, a halt was called for food and rest. Then they took the road once more across the plain and up the hills.

The pilgrims from other places—Damascus in the far north, for instance—gradually came nearer along their paths. At last, as they came to the foot of the hills of Samaria, the different tracks joined. The road was now crowded with folk from Persia and the plain of the Euphrates and Tigris, from Antioch among the Syrian hills of the north and the busy markets of Damascus.

It was a tired boy who, at sunset, heard gladly the call of the caravan-leader to halt in a glen among the hills on the southern side of the plain. They had now come near to the edge of the land of the Samaritans, who hated the Jews. Many pilgrims, indeed, from the north were so afraid of being attacked by the Samaritans that at this point they went eastward down the road from the Plain of Esdraelon through the gap of Jezreel under the shadow of Mount Gilboa into the Jordan valley and, turning south again, walked parallel with the river right down to Jericho. Thence, turning west, they climbed the hills of Judaea to Jerusalem, thus altogether

avoiding Samaria.[1] But Jesus was in a large caravan with many sturdy, young, hot-blooded Galileans in it, and it would have gone hard with any gang of Samaritan raiders who tried to attack the camp.

Happily tired and hungry, Jesus lay by the camp-fire to eat his evening meal. Contentedly drowsy at the end of this first day of the journey, he lay down, after evening prayer, under the star-strewn sky. Neither the hooting of an owl nor the demoniac yell of a jackal could keep him from deep dreamless sleep.

[1] See map.

CHAPTER IX

JERUSALEM

AT the first flush of dawn the caravan was astir. The boys helped to fold the sleeping-mats and to load up the asses. Then Jesus again took the trail southward. Ahead lay the road through the hills of Samaria. They went through a beautiful valley on the slopes of which orchards flowered and vines 'put forth their tender shoot'. Then they came to a town of the Samaritans.

The people were angry at seeing the caravan of Jewish pilgrims. For the Samaritans said that the Jews' Temple in Jerusalem was not the House of the True God, but that God's true Temple was on their own Samaritan mountain—Mount Gerizim—where they were about to celebrate their own Passover Festival.[1] As they went on their way the boys in the caravan caught sight of such marvels as most of them had never seen before. On one of the hills was a beautiful new city with a temple and a justice-hall. Massive round towers of defence flanked the city gates. Roman horsemen and chariots clattered from that gateway along a paved causeway that ran steeply down to the caravan road. This city was Sebaste, which Herod the Great had built a short time before Jesus was born. It was the capital of Samaria.

Late that afternoon the caravan of pilgrims came out through a valley to the city of Sychar, the southernmost city of the Samaritans. Two solemn mountains stood like giant sentinels, one on each side of the road. The gaunt ridge of Mount Gerizim—the Mount of Blessing—threw its rough, craggy crest against the afternoon sky, while the steep flanks of Mount Ebal—the Mount of Cursing—loomed northwards above them on the other side of their path.[2] On the very

[1] For the historical reasons for this hatred see Chapter XXIII.

[2] Mount Gerizim is 2,800 feet above sea-level and Mount Ebal 3,095 feet. The floor of the valley between them is 1,540 feet above sea-level.

crest of Mount Gerizim, the Samaritans were getting ready to celebrate their Passover.

Just here the narrow way opened out from the shadow of these two mountains into a lovely sheltered plain, high among the hills, the valley of Mukhneh. Jesus had now come right through Samaria, from its northern frontier, which faced Galilee, to its southern edge, where Judaea began. The hills of Judaea lay straight ahead to the south between the pilgrims and Jerusalem.

At dawn on the third day the long, streaming line of pilgrims stretched out again. They climbed the hills on to the wild Judaean ridge. It was a stiff climb from the rich, green plain to the wild, tortured, boulder-strewn crests of grey rock. Ravines ran down on their left towards the River Jordan on the east and on their right to the Plain of the Great Sea on the west.

Every hill and gully of this rugged highland was alive with thrilling stories. There, on that hill-top on the left, King Saul was born. Up these ravines from the Plain of the Sea on the right the fierce Philistines had stormed from Ajalon against Saul and his garrison encamped at Michmash and at Gilgal; when Jonathan, with unheard-of daring, attacked the enemy's post alone with one attendant and slew twenty Philistines, while his father, Saul, following up this feat, sent the panic-stricken enemy in headlong flight down the valleys. Then David swept his enemies over these ridges, driving them like a torrent in full spate down into the ocean. He alone, of all the kings in the long story of that land, ruled on that ridge of Jerusalem from the Western Ocean to the Eastern Desert. Jesus saw, too, a hill-top on his left, the place where Jacob, flying for his life from his furious brother Esau, rested and slept and dreamed of the ladder with angels going up and down. So he called the place Bethel—the House of God.

Even the sturdy boy Jesus was now thoroughly tired. All else was forgotten, however, when suddenly, as they

came round a bluff of the hills and looked out across the land to the south, there flashed upon Jesus' eyes the splendid vision of the walls and the towers of Jerusalem. There was a regular camping-place for Galilean pilgrims on the Mount of Olives on the east side of Jerusalem. So the caravan swung to the left just before they came to Jerusalem and climbed the long ridge of the mount.

As they did so, a young man in the caravan drew from the folds of his tunic a reed-pipe and began to play a joyful air. One by one the voices took up the thrilling Song of Ascents. Jesus' boyish treble mingled with the men's tenor and bass as they sang:

'I was glad when they said unto me
Let us go unto the house of the Lord.
Our feet shall stand within thy gates,
O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is builded as a city
That is compact together
Whither the tribes go up,
The tribes of the Lord,
Unto the testimony of Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there are set thrones of judgement,
The thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee,
Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
Because of the house of the Lord our God
I will seek thy good.'

Singing this song, Jesus walked up the long slope of the mount to the crest where the Galilean pilgrims camped on the ridge. There the glorious city met the boy's eyes. Always a city of wonder, Jerusalem, as Jesus looked at it that day was, in fact, more marvellous and splendid than it

'There the glorious City met the boy's eyes.'

The Temple area, Jerusalem, from the Mount of Olives. The Holy of Holies was where the Mosque dome now is. The Kidron Ravine falls between the cemetery under the walls and the olive-trees on this side.

(The photograph being taken through a telephoto lens reduces the distance by a half.)

had ever before been and than it ever would be in later ages. Between him and the Holy City was the deep ravine of the winter-torrent, Kidron. The later afternoon sun, near to setting behind Jerusalem, threw its rays across that city, sacred and precious beyond all telling to a Jewish boy.

The glint of the setting sun on a Roman sentinel's brazen helmet drew Jesus' eyes to Herod's first great building—the tall, square Tower of Antony. This tower was the crown of the Roman fortress, that ruled on the western hill overlooking the very Temple Courts. There was always a special guard of soldiers housed in this castle[1] at the time of the Passover in case of riot. In the midst of the city was Herod's marble open-air theatre, while along the edge of that farther hill above the Valley of Hinnom was his royal palace, with its three mighty towers.

These gorgeous buildings—all carved from the pure white stone in the enormous quarries that Solomon had first made under the very hills on which Jerusalem is built—did not for long hold the eyes of the boy Jesus. For him, for every Jewish boy, the centre, not only of Jerusalem but of the world, was under that roof of gold right in front of him as he gazed from the Mount of Olives. For that shining roof covered the Holy of Holies. It was the heart of the new Temple that had been building through the years of Herod's reign and even now, after he had been dead ten years, was not quite completed.

What made Jerusalem the very centre of the universe was not, however, that roof of gold itself, nor the shining white building. It was the rough, unhewn Sacred Rock beneath that roof. This was the Rock to which Abraham had led his loved boy Isaac to sacrifice him. There the Ark of the Covenant had rested. Above that Rock the Shekinah—the very

[1] It was from this tower, named after the Roman general Antony, who ruled Egypt and was the lover of Cleopatra, that the soldiers rushed out some fifty years later to save the life of Paul of Tarsus, and from its steps Paul spoke to the crowd.

Splendour of Jehovah Himself—rested. It was the Holy of Holies.

The Jewish people were scattered across the wide world. They bowed under the rule of the Roman power in Greece and Egypt, Asia and Italy, Spain and Gaul. Yet they were still one nation—and they were one because for them Jehovah the Invisible God of Heaven and Earth, had chosen them as his people, and because his worship centred in that hidden Rock within the walls of this Temple on which Jesus was now feasting his eyes.

No city in the whole world had such a story as Jerusalem. Jesus knew how, a thousand and fifty years before he was born, David the shepherd-poet and king led his forces from the old capital city, Hebron, in order to capture the hill-fort of the tribe of Jebusites. It had for long resisted all other sieges. After a terrific struggle, David won. So he made that hill-fort his people's new capital, calling it the City of Peace, Jerusalem. The first Temple, Jesus knew, was raised above that Sacred Rock by King Solomon. Then the Pharaohs of Egypt and the Emperors from Nineveh and Babylon threw their armies to and fro across the land in devastating wars. At last the fierce tyrant of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, crushed Jerusalem and hurled its Temple down in dreadful ruin. He carried the Jewish people away from Jerusalem—Zion, as they called it—over the desert into captivity by the River Euphrates. For many years the Temple and the city lay desolate.

So the story passed through Jesus' memory of how Cyrus, the King of Persia, conquered Babylon, and not only sent the Jews back to their home in Jerusalem to live under their own Prince Zerubbabel, but told them to rebuild the Temple. A few, a very few of the boys who had been carried as captive-slaves from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon came back over the camel-tracks of the desert seventy years later, as very old, white-bearded men, and stood on the grass-grown waste where Solomon's Temple had been. There they

watched their grandsons, who had been born in Babylon, begin to rebuild Jerusalem. No sooner had the noble Nehemiah, cup-bearer to Cyrus, the Persian King, rebuilt the walls of the city than Alexander the Great seized Jerusalem. From his day onward Jerusalem was in agony through many sieges and famines. War after war broke on her. She was never free from foreign tyrants.

At long last her deliverer was born, the Jewish nationalist, Judas Maccabeus. At the head of an army of Jews aflame with the fire of freedom, he captured the city and purified its Temple. That was more than a hundred and fifty years before Jesus was born. But civil war broke out between the Jews themselves. To stop it Rome stretched out her long and mighty arm. Pompey, nearly sixty years before Jesus was born, stormed the city at the head of the Roman legions of the East. Ever since then, through the seventy years before the twelve-year-old boy Jesus came up to the city, Jerusalem had been under the rule of Rome.[1]

As Jesus that spring evening watched the thronging pilgrims, in numbers that baffle calculation,[2] there came into his memory—as into that of all pilgrims—the song of the joy of the pilgrimage of the people to Jerusalem, which they sang on the way:

'Many nations shall go up and say,
Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
And to the House of the God of Israel;
And he will teach us of his ways,
And we will walk in his paths.
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'

The sun had now set. The pilgrims began to prepare for rest. Jesus ate his evening meal with his father and mother

[1] See Chapter II, 'The Wise Men and the Despot'.

[2] It was reckoned by Josephus that from two and a half to three million Jews came up each year in those days for the Passover. This is probably an exaggeration, but the numbers certainly were very great.

on the Mount of Olives. He saw all round on the hill-sides the red glow of a thousand fires and heard the stir and hubbub of this vast multitude of people from many lands all preparing to go on the morrow to the Temple—the House of God.

With longing for the morrow in his heart, the boy lay down and slept.

CHAPTER X

'IN THE COURTS'

A WHITE-ROBED priest, standing before dawn on the topmost corner tower above the Temple colonnade, watched for the first shaft of light flung by the sun across the eastern hills. Beneath him were the walls of the Temple enclosure, with their outer towers, and then the naked rock to the boulder-strewn floor of the Kidron valley, fully four hundred and fifty feet below the priest.[1] The ray of dawn came. Behind the priest, across the wide marble Temple Courts, the roof of the Holy of Holies threw to the rising sun gold for gold.

The waiting priest signalled the dawn to an attendant in the court below. He, in turn, passed the word to the priests in the sanctuary. It was the signal to begin the morning sacrifice.[2]

Jesus started soon after dawn with Joseph amid the crowd of pilgrims to descend the path from the Mount of Olives down the terraced hill toward the city. Tall, dark cypresses, pines, and groves of myrtle lined the way down to where the path was shaded by the silver-green leafage of olive and fig.

That clear morning light shining across the ravine threw into sharp relief the battlements of the city walls. For four miles they crested the hills enclosing them with a hundred towers. Gigantic among these towers were the three that faced Jesus across the ravine. Built of enormous stones and crowned with powerful battlements, the three were called by Herod

[1] In the Kidron valley there are now over ninety feet of debris from the city walls and buildings thrown down in ruin during the different sieges of Jerusalem since Jesus' day, by Romans, Crusaders, Saracens, &c.

[2] From the foot of the mount of Olives to the pinnacle of the Temple where the priest stood was not two hundred yards. But from the ridge of the Mount where the boy Jesus stood to that Temple wall was about a thousand yards.

the Great, who built them, Hippicus and Phasaelus, after a friend and brother who were slain in war, and Mariamne, after his wife, whom he had himself killed in a fit of jealous rage.

Jesus, with Joseph, now crossed the rocky, dry channel of the Kidron. They climbed the Roman stone-stepped street up the side of the hill Ophel toward the walls of Jerusalem. Passing under the shadow of one of the gates, they began to mount through the narrow, steep streets of the city itself. The city bazaars were crowded with pilgrims from many lands. Here was a man from Spain jostling side by side with a merchant from Persia. A Jew from Lyons in Gaul was telling another Jew from the Nile valley about the savage islands of Britain, which only some sixty years earlier Julius Caesar had begun to conquer. From the Pillars of Hercules on the west, where the Atlantic met the Mediterranean, all the way to the Persian Gulf on the east, and from the northern cities on the Danube down to the southern cataracts of the Nile, Jews from all lands in the Roman Empire had come up to the Feast of the Passover.

So Jesus made his way through the dense, ever-moving masses of pilgrims. Here were booths where men had their sandals repaired after the long journeying. Yonder a tailor mended a torn tunic. Over there they bought a new camel-saddle, or a leather water-bottle; and here, again, laid in a store of dates or raisins, olives or cheese. The streets through which Joseph led Jesus were called after the occupation of the men in the shops. There were Baker Street and Fish Street, Wool Street and Braziers Street, and so on for the Tailors and the Butchers, the Timber Merchants and the rest.

They climbed to where the great bridge across the Tyropaeon valley led from the city into the Temple itself. The great gateways entered the Temple area from the west. For the east side facing the Mount of Olives was built on the precipitous edge of Kidron. Jesus saw the colossal Tyropaeon bridge with arches each spanning over forty feet. The

spring-stones alone measured twenty-four feet in length. The whole bridge, fifty feet broad, ran for over three hundred and fifty feet from Mount Zion, on which he now stood, to Mount Moriah, where the road led into the great enclosure or outer court of the Temple. They began to cross the bridge. Looking down over the parapet, Jesus could see the floor of the Tyropaeon valley more than two hundred and twenty feet below him.

Pressing on among the crowd of pilgrims, Joseph led Jesus under the arch of the gate into the outer court which went all round the Temple. Running along its southern side, where Jesus now stood, rose one of the wonders of the world. It was a superb roofed colonnade over seven hundred feet long, of which the central aisle was made by eighty Corinthian marble pillars a hundred feet high.[1] The two side aisles were made of marble pillars fifty feet high. This colonnade was like a cloister running along one side of the vast square of the outer court, on each side of which were similar, though not so overwhelming, aisles of columns. All the colonnades were roofed with cedar-wood.

This outer court was called 'the Court of the Gentiles', or the Peoples, because folk of all nations and races might come into it. As Jesus entered a fearful din broke on his astonished ears. Calves lowed and bellowed and lambs bleated, drowning the frightened cooing of innumerable doves. Money-changers argued and browbeat the pilgrims from distant lands; and the sellers of lambs and of doves chaffered and cheated. Every family of pilgrims must sacrifice a lamb or a dove. It must be without blemish. And all these sold within the Temple Court had been examined and passed as spotless.

Joseph bought a lamb. Taking it in his arms, he and Jesus moved on toward the Temple itself. So far any one could have come in so long as he behaved himself, even though he

[1] This colonnade alone was therefore longer and higher than York Minster in England.

were not a Jew. Now, however, Jesus and Joseph came to a marble screen four and a half feet high, which ran all across the court. Steps led up from it through openings in a balustrade to a higher and inner part of the court. Going up these steps Jesus saw the Stone of Forbidding. On it a notice was carved in Greek capital letters—not in Hebrew, for it was necessary that every one should understand this, and Greek was the one language understood by educated men through the whole civilized world.[1]

> LET NO FOREIGNER ENTER WITHIN
> THE SCREEN AND ENCLOSURE AROUND
> THE HOLY PLACE. WHOSOEVER IS TAKEN
> SO DOING WILL HIMSELF BE THE
> CAUSE THAT DEATH OVERTAKES HIM.

This meant that God was to be worshipped only by Jews in the Temple which Jesus was now nearing. Jesus walked up the steps on to the chel or terrace. Before him rose the noble central building of the Temple. Nine gateways led into it, four on each of the two sides, north and south, and one at the great entrance in the east. Folding doors of carved gold and silver were in eight of these gateways. The ninth, the mighty gate at the east end of the building, facing the Mount of Olives, was superbly wrought of Corinthian brass. It was known all over the world as 'the Gate Beautiful'.[2] So stupendous was it, that it taxed the full strength of twenty men to open each morning and to close it at nightfall.

Going up the steps through one of these gates, they were now in the last court that the boy was allowed to enter. It was called the Court of the Women, not because it was specially for women, but because it was the last court into which they were allowed to penetrate. Beyond it lay the Court of the Priests with the altar; and within that court the Holy Place, beyond which, behind a curtain, was the

[1] By good fortune one of these actual stones has been discovered in excavating; it conforms to the description given by Josephus.

[2] See Acts iii. 2.

Holy of Holies over the Sacred Rock. Only priests might enter the Court of the Priests, or a Jew who was coming—as Joseph was that morning—to sacrifice.

So Jesus stayed behind in the Court of the Women while Joseph went forward up the steps into the Court of the Priests to sacrifice. In the centre of this court was the sacred altar. The priests stood in a long row. The crowds of men who were, like Joseph, heads of families come to celebrate Passover, filled the space. The outer gates of the Priests' Court were now closed. Trumpets sounded three blasts. Their blare drowned the bleating of the terrified lambs and rang across the roofs of the city. Joseph slew his lamb, while the nearest priest caught the blood in a silver bowl and passed it on to the next and he to the next, and so on, till the priests at the altar took it and threw the blood of the sacrifice at the base of the altar. It ran down through a channel into the hidden rock of sacrifice beneath.

All the while the Levites chanted the Hallel[1] that sings the story of the coming of Israel out of Egypt in poetry that thrills the soul like a trumpet call. Joseph and the other men repeated the first line of each verse and cried 'Hallelujah'.

The parts of the lamb reserved for the Passover Feast were placed on a metal dish and offered with the burning incense at the altar. So Joseph received back these sacred parts of the Passover Lamb, and went out again. He and Jesus turned to the left as they passed out through the Gate Beautiful. They then came on to the north side of the Temple but were still inside the great Court of the Gentiles. Above him, Jesus saw the Roman sentries walking up and down on the high battlements of the Tower of Antony each with a short broadsword at his hip and a javelin in his hand. They kept a watchful eye on the Temple Courts lest any fight or rebellion should break out among the excited pilgrims. The two went out into the city to a room where Mary and

[1] Psalms cxiii to cxviii. Hallel means 'Praise', and 'Hallelu-jah' means 'Praise Jehovah'. Hence our 'Hallelujah' and its variants.

the others of the Nazareth company waited to celebrate the Passover Supper. Mary took the sacred parts of the lamb and roasted them carefully in the earthenware oven.

That evening, when all was ready and the table arranged, a cup of red wine mixed with water was poured out for every one present and over it a blessing was spoken. Each one then washed his hands in order to be clean before beginning the sacred feast. The friends reclined around the table, leaning on the left side with the right hand free. Before the feast really began, Jesus asked the question that was always put at this point by the youngest person present.

'Why', he asked, 'is this night distinguished from all other nights?'

Joseph, in reply, took up the story of the Hebrews from Abraham onward. He told how the children of Israel went down in time of famine into the land of Egypt by the Nile. There they were made slaves under the rule of the Pharaohs. At last Moses arose and led them across the Red Sea and over the desert of Sinai to the hills of Moab. There he died; but Joshua took up the leadership; and the people crossed the Jordan into this land of Canaan. There David built Jerusalem on this very hill of Zion where they feasted.

They all then lifted up their voices together to sing. The words sung were the first part of the Hallel,[1]

> 'From the rising of the sun
> Unto the going down of the same
> The Lord's name is to be praised.
> Hallelujah!'

Again the hands were rinsed for ritual cleanliness. An unleavened cake was broken. A sandwich was made of the pieces by putting bitter herbs between them. This was then dipped in the paste of fruits and vinegar and a broken piece was handed to each of the company. The eating of the Passover Lamb followed and the accompanying dishes. After

[1] Psalms cxiii, cxiv.

the Grace, the second half of the Hallel was chanted.[1] The hands were once more washed before the third glass was drunk. As Jesus sang the words of the closing psalm he thought of the things that he was to do on the following day.

'I will pay my vows unto the Lord,
Yea, in the presence of all his people,
In the courts of the Lord's house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye the Lord.'

The day was now ended. His mind was thronging with thoughts of the story of the past of his people, of how God had spoken to them, and of the way in which God had that very day been speaking to him in his heart.

What were the thoughts in his mind that night?

He was twelve years old. He knew that a boy at that age, or at the latest at thirteen years old, as a Son of the Law, began to be responsible for what he did and said. That age was fixed for becoming a Son of the Law because then[2] a boy's inner strength of body and mind, his powers and his will, have grown to the point where he must begin to stand alone, to will and to act for himself. It is the age when there come to a boy longings and thoughts that are more real to him than his home, or games, or food; thoughts and feelings that, nevertheless, he can often never speak of even to his closest friend. The boy does not fully know what is happening to him. He feels the stormy wind of new gales that are blowing through his life. He knows that he must either take the rudder and guide his life by the stars of God or let it be driven by the gusts of passion on to the rocks.

It is no wonder, then, that for the boy Jesus at this hour in his life, something new happened at the time of the Passover at Jerusalem in his thirteenth year. Waves of fresh

[1] Psalms cxv–cxviii.

[2] It comes a little later in the colder lands of Northern Europe or North America.

experience that swept into and through him. Nothing was ever quite the same again for him.

What were those experiences?

There was, first, the thrill of the new horizons—the coming out from the sheltered cup of hills round Nazareth, to join with the caravan of pilgrims winding over the hills and along the valleys of his nation's history to the centre of the world—Jerusalem. Secondly, every hill and valley in that little land through which he had walked from Nazareth to Jerusalem was full of the sound of the voices of prophet or priest or king, of leader, warrior, or saint, from Abraham to Jesus' own day. On those hills the strong will of God had welded wayward, wandering tent-dwelling tribes into an immortal nation with a new vision of the life of men and of the meaning of the Eternal. The boy Jesus saw that vision in those days of walking from Nazareth to Jerusalem. In the Temple Courts, again, his eyes drank in every happening. This was the House of God, the God before whom he had knelt by the side of Mary and Joseph and in the synagogue at Nazareth, and whose very presence he had felt under the stars on the hill-top. Now, this very night, Jesus had come to the greatest experience of all—the Feast—the Passover Supper that in living pictures told the drama of his own nation's travel along the pilgrim way on which God had led the Jews through adventurous centuries.

Deepest of all for Jesus was the ever-present question that ran through the talk of the pilgrims as they had walked up to Jerusalem and in its Temple Courts.

'When will the Prince come?' they asked each other. 'When shall we see the Messiah, the Anointed, who will set this people free?'

The mind of the boy Jesus was full of that thought as, in those night-watches and in the busy Passover days, he moved a stage farther on the journey from boyhood to the beginning of grown-up life.

'Why is this night different from all other nights?' he had

asked Joseph, as thousands of Jewish boys had asked their fathers that night at the Passover Supper. For Jesus, indeed, it was in a wonderful way a night different from all others. For new thoughts dawned in him—of God and the coming Prince, the Messiah. But more wonderful still was what was to happen to him in the days that followed.

CHAPTER XI

'MY FATHER'S BUSINESS'

JESUS woke to a hubbub of preparation as the third morning broke.

The two great days of the Feast were over. The Passover Supper was eaten—the sacrifice offered. The Feast itself, indeed, would go on for some days longer. Many stayed on in order to discuss with the learned teachers of the Law within the Temple precincts or to visit old friends. Some wanted to enjoy and examine more closely the marvels of the city and of its Temple. All that was essential for 'keeping the Feast', however, was now done. The pilgrims who wished to do so were free to return home.

Most of them were eager to get back to their work. Weeds were growing fast in the spring sunshine and were threatening the growth of this farmer's wheat harvest. That man's vines needed watching now that the young tendrils were breaking from the gnarled stumps. The carpenter's workshop was without its master. Joseph remembered the jobs that were waiting to be done.

The large company of Nazareth pilgrims started on the homeward journey northward. The boys got together as usual in gangs of comrades and ran hither and thither. Joseph helped Mary on to the donkey's back and the start was made. They took it for granted that Jesus was with the other boys. Along the ridge of the Mount of Olives and then swinging sharply to the right up the scarp of the hills, the caravan took the north road. At last, as the sun was low in the sky, they came to the usual night halting-place for caravans from Jerusalem at Beeroth[1] on the ridge from which they could look back on the trail from Jerusalem and northward on the track to Galilee.

Where was Jesus?

[1] Near the present Ramallah.

Mary and Joseph went quickly to and fro among their neighbours. No one had seen him all day.

Where could he be? He was not in the caravan at all. He must be in Jerusalem. But with whom? Why? What could have happened? They must go back to find him. That, however, was impossible for Joseph at night alone with Mary on that dangerous road. It was haunted by robbers who were afraid of a big caravan, but were eager to pick out any straggling, unprotected, solitary pilgrims. Nor could Joseph leave Mary in the caravan to go homeward, fretting in ignorance as to what had become of her boy. There was nothing for it but to wait for dawn and then go back in the daylight to Jerusalem.

No sooner, then, had the sun risen than Joseph and Mary, saying 'farewell' to their Nazareth neighbours, hurried back southward along the road to Jerusalem in search of their son. They were in the city by midday. Go where they would, in the homes of acquaintances, in the bazaars, on the Mount of Olives, they could not find Jesus. On the third morning, racked with anxiety, they started again to search. What could have happened to him?

What had happened?

The thoughts that flamed in Jesus' mind that night after the Passover Supper absorbed his whole being and made him lose count of time. He felt that he must know, then and there, all that he could of God's will for his people—all that the wisest who had given their lives to study God's thought and purposes could tell him. And where could he learn that save from the most learned teachers of the sacred Writings? And where were they to be found save here in Jerusalem? He must seize this golden opportunity of asking them the questions that were now sounding in his soul with a new urgency.

That opportunity lay in the fact that the most famous Rabbis, or Masters in the Law, particularly on Sabbaths and

Feast Days, used to teach within the Temple precincts and to answer questions. So Jesus hurried down from the Mount, up through the city streets, and across the bridge into the Temple area. On the terrace, at the top of the fourteen steps that led up from the Court of the Gentiles, the boy found, as he expected, groups of listeners sitting, cross-legged, in the shadow of the cedar-roofed porches. The Rabbis were teaching, discussing doubtful points, and again answering questions put to them by the hearers. Drawing near to one of the groups, the boy Jesus began to listen with the rest. He became utterly absorbed in the discussion. His own mind was all aflame with questions.

Suddenly one of these questions framed itself in words and leapt from his lips. The Rabbi addressed could see both from the question itself and from the way it was framed that here was no precocious and aggressive boy putting himself forward impertinently in the face of his elders. Here was a mind burning its way into reality. Luke, who later heard the story of that day as it came through the memory of Jesus' mother, says that the Rabbis were astounded at the swift insight and comprehension, the mother-wit and power of putting ideas together that his questions and answers revealed.[1]

Jesus at once became part of the group engaged in discussion, a fellowship in which differences of age were forgotten in a quest for truth. In that search the flight of the hours was as swift as that of the swallow darting in and out to build her nest on the cedar beams of God's house.

No one, indeed, can be sure what were the questions discussed while Jesus listened and shared in the debate, that day and the next and the next. At that time, however, as we have seen, one question filled the minds of the people in all the world of the Jews. They all longed to know when the promised One would come who should bring in a New Age,

[1] The Greek word, *συνέσει*, that Luke uses, with his characteristic scientific and literary precision, suggests these qualities.

the 'Day of the Lord'; he who would save Israel from its evils into a freedom greater than the liberation from slavery that the Passover commemorated. Of this Messiah—the Anointed—as they called him, they were asking: When will he come? What will he be like? What will he do? What will his reign bring about?

In the home and in the synagogue, in the market-place and most of all here in the Temple, the burning question was this—what will the Messiah do and be? Will he be a warrior-prince throwing off the Roman power and establishing a political Reign of God? Or will he be leader of the people into a spiritual Kingdom of God? Will he redeem the people not from political subjection to Rome, but from slavery to their own sin, just as a Roman citizen could, by paying the price, redeem or buy a slave back into freedom?

The coming of the Messiah was probably, then, first among the questions discussed during those hours in that group. Jesus knew—as all Jewish boys did then—the forth-tellings, the prophecies, that had been written in the Sacred Scrolls. He had learned the Songs of the Messiah. At home in the evenings, when work was over and father had put aside the saw and the plane, and when he talked with mother as she mended a torn coat, the thought of the coming Messiah was much in their speech. So Jesus put to the Rabbis the questions that had come to him, and when they asked him what he thought, returned the answers that had shaped themselves in his own mind as he 'grew in wisdom'.

Jesus' spirit, as a boy as well as later, broke through the crust of custom and the dust of conventional thoughts to the very heart of truth. He saw as clearly as the sun in the sky that if God sent his Anointed One—or the Messiah—to bring in the full rule of his good will, or Kingdom, then the Messiah and his ways must be true to the very nature of God. If God is love, the Messiah must be love. Jesus knew that the heart of God is the heart of a Father. That burning reality—the love of God who made the heavens

and the earth—consumed in its flame all others. Jesus did not, as we have seen, come to this thought suddenly that day. It was not the feverish feeling of the hour and the place. The steady growing certainty was twined in all his thought that the Spirit who made the sunshine and the flowers of the field, who moved the stars in their courses, was his Father. So the one central, natural purpose of Jesus' boy-life was simply to do the will of the Father in Heaven whose Son he was—to be about his Father's business.

Two days passed. The third day came. Suddenly, the discussion in the circle was broken into by a voice that he knew better than any voice in the world calling his name, 'Jesus'.

He turned. It was his mother.

'Son,' she said, 'why have you dealt with us in this way? Behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing.'

The boy was simply and frankly astonished. He had so often talked at home with them about the Father that it seemed obvious that he would be where he could learn about him. His mother, who had talked with him on the house-top and on the hill-side, knew the way the boy's inner spirit had grown in the love of God.

'How is it,' he asked in surprise, 'that you sought for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?'[1]

His mother could not understand what he meant by this; nor could Joseph. But she kept the saying and all that had happened in her heart and often thought over it.

Jesus knew, as he looked into his mother's face, that it was the will of God his Father that he should go back to live his boy-life in the old home in Nazareth. 'His Father's business' was to be for him for some eighteen years one with Joseph's business of the carpenter in the workshop in the little city among the hills. So he turned from the enthralling discussions, said farewell to the Rabbis, and, going with Joseph and Mary into the streets and through the gates, struck the path from Jerusalem over the hills again to Nazareth.

[1] Others render it 'in my Father's house'.

CHAPTER XII

THE CARPENTER'S SHOP

AS the boy Jesus trudged northward to Nazareth, his mind was full of the great scenes and thoughts at Jerusalem. 'To be about my Father's business' meant living on in Nazareth in the home of the carpenter, playing with the other boys, taking his meals with his mother and father and the others, lending a hand in the carpenter's workshop; yet doing all these homely things with his now heightened knowledge of what God, his heavenly Father, had in his will for his people Israel, and for Jesus himself as a member of that nation.

Soon the family settled down again to the life of every day; Mary in the house, Joseph in the carpenter's shop, and the children everywhere.

All seemed to go on as before. Yet for Jesus, in a real way, life was different. The horizon was wider. He was a growing boy. He felt new powers beginning to flow through him. His body was developing. His swift, piercing young brain, his spiritual vision, had flashed into action as he talked with the Rabbis in the Temple. Going to Jerusalem straight from the group of boys around the teacher at Nazareth, he had now caught the atmosphere of the university of his nation. Coming out of the synagogue among the hills, with the simple teaching of its Rabbi, he had breathed in Jerusalem the air of the ancient central Holy Place of his people. He had seen a whole world in Jerusalem—men of his own nation, but coming from Rome and from Egypt, from Athens and from Persia, a world beyond not only the home but the land where he lived. The pilgrims from many nations in the robes of different colour had shown him Jerusalem as the spiritual home of a race scattered across the world. He saw the wonderful place of the Jewish people in

God's purpose as a witness to the true knowledge of God among all nations.

But at present, clearly, 'to be about my Father's business' meant, for Jesus, hard work in the carpenter's shop. But what a joy it was, too, how full of zest to a boy who put his body, mind, and soul into his work!

Not long after sunrise he was off down the street across the tiny brook and up the arched, shaded narrow bazaar. Jesus went by the workshops of the saddler and the sandal-maker, the copper-smith and the grain-merchant; and the other booths where men made and sold the things that the people of Nazareth needed. Other boys, the sons of these other men, were on their way also to help their fathers, to learn their craft or trade. Jesus was known to these boys simply as Jesus the carpenter's son; or Jesus the son of Joseph.

At last he came to the carpenter's workshop. It was great training for the boy—for his body and mind as well as his spirit and all his ways of dealing with men. He learned his craft as all boys do in the East; first by watching and then by practising with his own hands. Joseph, for most of the work, sat on the ground, barefoot, holding the wood with his strong, supple feet, Jesus lending a hand. Jesus learned to drive and draw the saw through a plank, to control the clean flight of the plane as it smoothed the door panel, the knack of the crisp cut of the chisel and the straight drive of the hammer. The muscles of his arms and shoulders grew strong and tough and tireless as he grew taller and more skilled in the work.

Joseph talked with Jesus as they worked. He was a good workman and a good father—strong, loving, inventive, clean in mind and speech, friendly, honest, and helpful to his neighbours. Otherwise, how could Jesus, when he became a man and gave people the most wonderful vision of God that the world has ever known, use—as the best word to describe God—'Father'?

The work that came to Joseph the carpenter was not merely the odds and ends of repairing. He was house-constructor and joiner. The houses of Nazareth were built with frames of stout wooden beams and a roof-beam which rested on the walls and held the ceiling. The strong door-frames and the doors themselves, shelves for shops and counters on which to show and measure the goods, the cedar-wood chests for holding the robes and rugs of the more well-to-do families and other furniture were made by him. Jesus helped also to make the tools for the work on the land. He planed the handle for the hoe or fork, making it smooth so that it would not blister the peasant's hand. He cut a light, flexible, enduring threshing-flail. He shaped the nicely-balanced yoke fitting easily to the neck and shoulders of the oxen; for a bad yoke tortured the poor animal's shoulder and galled his neck, but a good yoke made the work easy.

'This yoke of mine is easy,' Joseph could proudly say as he sold such a one to a farmer. There were wooden saddles for the camels, wooden yokes for loading the sheaves of barley and wheat on the backs of donkeys and camels. The plough, too, simple though it looked, called for highly skilled work. It must have a light, but very tough shaft, a firm body; and its handle must be fitted and joined with wooden wedges to the shaft so that it blended lightness with strength and could be handled easily.[1] The plough must stand the shock and jar and wrench of the tugging oxen, and must not be shattered when the point of the little iron share struck a rock hidden under the shallow earth. So the work-shop was full of the buzz of labour. The hiss of the plane over the plank, the rasp of the saw through the beam, the tap of the mallet on the chisel, and the driving blow of the hammer on the wooden nail were accompanied by the swish of bare feet in the shavings as Jesus moved to and fro at his work.

Jesus watched with his candid eyes all the life of the town

[1] See photograph, Pl. XXV.

and the country-side as the people came in and out. There was, for instance, a new door to be made for the Ark in the synagogue where the Sacred Scrolls of the Law were kept. Beautiful cedar-wood must be chosen for so holy a purpose. Herod Antipas began, while Jesus was a boy, to rebuild the city of Sepphoris three miles away, which Varus had burned down when he crushed the rebellion of Judas of Galilee.[1] The young carpenters in Sepphoris had been killed in the fighting, or crucified afterwards by Varus, or sent away as slaves across the sea. So the men of Sepphoris must have come to Nazareth for help. They needed new doors and shutters, clothes-chests, house-frames, wooden gates, latches, and hinges.

The country people as well as those in the town needed Joseph's workmanship. The shepherd came in from the hills to have his crook repaired. As he waited he told of the life of the flocks that he led over the hills; of how fierce and daring jackals snatched a strayed lamb from the edge of the flock at twilight. The merchant wanted the front of his little counting-room and booth in the market-place remade. He told of the camel caravans that had come in with dates across the desert from the Tigris and from Persia. The farmer needed a new plough. A favourite yoke, too, had been broken by a kicking ox. Could Joseph splice it? His talk was of the early and latter rains and of the birds robbing him of the seed; of the good and stony ground; of thistles and thorns and how he had sold his grain to merchants with camels who had been passing through from Damascus to Egypt. A swaggering, prosperous landlord wanted a bigger barn. He boasted loudly of his riches. Yet only a little time after that his son came round for a bier on which to carry his father to his grave. Sometimes a fellow craftsman, a boat-builder from Capernaum, a day's walk distant, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, dropped in to chat with Joseph.

Thus the workshop and the home were a school where

[1] See Chapter VI.

Jesus learned, not only how to judge good wood from bad, avoiding cracked or knotty planks, and how to shape wood to good uses; but also how to read men's hearts—their love and greed, their pride and hardness, as well as their goodness and courage and all the things that go to make the lives of men. Deeper even than that, Jesus learned, as the young carpenter and builder of Nazareth, to feel in common tasks well done for neighbours the glow of work done for God.

One day Joseph could not go down to the workshop. He was ill. He lay at home, helpless, on his mat-bed. He did not get better. Then the heart-breaking wailing of women's voices went up—for Joseph was dead.

Jesus was now the head of the home. For eight days he stayed in the house with his mother, during the time of mourning. Then he girded his tunic, tightened his sandals, and went along the narrow streets to the bazaars. He must take charge now of the whole work; for there was mother to support and the other boys and girls to keep. There were at least seven mouths to feed, seven bodies to clothe. It all fell on his young shoulders. Jesus became the head of the household. So he himself learned something of what it is to be a father; and of the responsibilities that belong to a husband.

While Jesus was working to keep his mother and the girls at home, and training the boys to help in making things for the people who came in and out of the carpenter's shop, he saw them every day more clearly, as the children of God. He saw God as the loving Creator, who builds for these men and women, these boys and girls, his Eternal Home in which he cares for them as a Father cares for his family. Everything that Jesus did as boy and then as young man shaped his thought of life and strengthened his soul.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HILL-TOP

AS the afternoon sun began to go down, it threw the shadow of the great hill over the boys and girls playing 'touch' in the Nazareth market-place. Then Jesus sometimes laid down his plane, put on his sandals, straightened his back, shook the shavings from his robe as he girt it into the waistband, and—stooping under the lintel—strode into the open.

When he wanted to be alone, he went often throughout his life up to the crest of a hill. So in those days, when he was growing from a boy into a young man, he climbed the narrow lane that led up, till at last there were no more houses. Even the vine-terraces with their growing grape-clusters began to give way to scanty grass on which bleating goats and sheep grazed.

Jesus came at last to the ridge of the hill. A cool, bracing breeze blew where it listed—in his hair and on his cheek. He took deep, life-giving breaths of the air, sharp with the coolness of the Great Sea and racy with the tang of wild thyme. Up here in the solitude and silence, breathing the free air of the hills, the traffic of the wide world and the long story of his own people spread out in pictures before his eyes.

He could see, across the purple haze that slowly rose to the north-east out of the deep Jordan valley, the rolling eastern uplands rich in corn.[1] Across those hills, thousands of years before, Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people, folded his tents, and, not knowing whither he went, led his countless camels, his flocks of sheep and herds of cattle from those hills down the slopes into the Jordan valley and up into these nearer hills of Palestine. Southward, across that Plain of Esdraelon which lay at his feet, Jesus saw, within a

[1] Follow the imagined thought of Jesus with the map spread before you, as the land was spread before him.

day's walk, the gap in the hills of Samaria through which the merchants passed with their camels from the north when they bought the boy Joseph from his brothers. Through the valleys of those hills and down the sea-plain the camel-men carried Joseph away to sell him in Egypt as a slave.

Swinging his gaze south-eastward along that farther horizon over Jordan, Jesus saw, in the haze, the shimmering curves of the hills of Gilead. South of them lay Moab. Moses had led his people all across the desert out of Egyptian slavery to that hill. And there Moses died. Over the Jordan itself, which was hidden from Jesus' eyes by the profound depth of the valley through which it flows, Joshua had led the people to besiege and capture Jericho, and to fight their way up the glens into the Promised Land.

Close at Jesus' feet rose the steep, conical-shaped Mount Tabor, with a glen at its foot. From the hill-side, Deborah, the wise woman who ruled and judged the people, and Barak, the army-general, watched while the nine hundred chariots of Sisera thundered across the Plain of Esdraelon. Barak then loosed his ten thousand highland warriors, who charged down the glen and into that plain. The Kishon river, in full spate from a hill storm, raged in a foaming torrent and overflowed its banks till the chariot-wheels of Sisera stuck fast in the mud. The stormy rush of the triumph song of Deborah, which every Nazareth boy knew, came back to Jesus:

> 'The Kings came and fought;
> They fought from heaven;
> The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
> The River Kishon swept them away,
> That ancient river, the river Kishon.[1]

Jesus remembered, too, the story of the Arabs—the Midianites—from the desert-plateau eastward over the Jordan, who came into that same Plain—'the children of the East . . . as locusts for multitude, both they and their camels

[1] Judges v. 19–21.

without number.' So the poor Israelites were forced to fly into caves in the mountains and to their fortified hill-villages. But the 'mighty man of valour'—Gideon, drew the warriors together behind the stream that still flows from the wonderful spring running out of the foot of Mount Gilboa—which Jesus could plainly see from Nazareth hill—and sent the Arabs in flight down the steep Jezreel valley over the Jordan to their native desert.

That other immortal story, Jesus recalled, too, when the Philistines came up the plain by the sea and, pressing forward into the Plain of Esdraelon, held dreadful battle with King Saul on the slopes of Mount Gilboa. There King Saul's sons, the three princes—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishia—laid down their lives in desperate fight. The giant monarch himself on that slope, wounded, yet unbroken in spirit, took his own sword and threw himself upon its point, preferring to die so rather than to fall into the hands of the enemy.[1] The red soil of the Plain of Esdraelon at Jesus' feet seemed, indeed, soaked with the blood of the armies of the Assyrian Emperors, the Midianite Arab hordes, the Philistine forces that had battled to and fro across those spaces where now Jesus saw the barley waving in the breeze.

Jesus heard the voices of the prophets who on those hills had shown to the kings and to the people that their greatness would not come in these fightings, but by the inner hidden victory of the spirit of good over evil, of justice over oppression; and that the rule of God was not by might, nor by power, but by spirit.

Under the lion-headed bluff of Mount Carmel, which Jesus saw silhouetted against the setting sun on the other side of the Plain of Esdraelon, Elijah took the water to pour on the altar when he struggled with the priests of Baal. Jesus could just see, at the foot of that mountain, the silver thread of the River Kishon, where the priests of Baal were slain. It was

[1] 1 Samuel xxxi. 4.

'Jesus could see the lion-headed bluff of Mount Carmel.'

From the shoulder of Mount Carmel looking a little south of east over the Plain of Esdraelon to Jezreel and across the Jordan Rift.

from the foot of Mount Carmel that King Ahab, at Elijah's command, galloped his sweating chariot horses right across the northern side of the Plain of Esdraelon from farthest west under Carmel to farthest east at Jezreel by Mount Gilboa, striving to get home before the torrents of rain turned the earth into a bog that would founder his wheels.

These stories thronged in upon Jesus as they pour in a torrent upon any one who, knowing the national history as he did, stands on those Nazareth hills overlooking that plain and those mountains and valleys. And when he turned his face northward and saw the loveliest of all the visions of that land—the snow-majesty of Mount Hermon, whose head seems to uphold the heavens and at whose feet the Jordan is born—his soul leapt in wonder at the works of God.

As Jesus stood up and walked along that Nazareth hill-crest, however, it was not only the wonder-world of the past that swept over his memory. The world of the present ran its scouring tides round those hills. Between Jesus and the Great Sea to the west, camel caravans went padding along through the broad, rolling lower hills. The drivers of those caravans bearing silks and spices from the East, carried the news of distant peoples. They carried the happenings of men by the River Tigris and the River Euphrates, in Babylon and Bagdad, by the banks of the Nile and in the Roman ships in the port of Caesarea to listeners by the shores of Galilee and in the bazaars of Sepphoris.

Jesus could catch the glint of the sun on the sails of ships going out to sea. From the port of Caesarea ships put out on their voyages with cargoes of silks from Persia, glass bowls from Sidon, purple robes from Tyre, earthenware jars from Kefar Hananya; salt fish from Tarichaea on the Lake of Galilee; tubs of refined pitch from the Dead Sea; jars of the rich olive oil and the sweet wines of Galilee; spices from the edge of the desert; pearls from the coast. The ships sailed out from Palestine past Ephesus and Troy northward and eastward into the Black Sea. They coasted along the

Sinai desert shore and up the delta of the Nile. They ploughed their way towards the Tiber and the wharves of Rome, to Marseilles and the Rhone and even to the coast of Spain.

The ships came back to Jesus' country with swords, sandals, and mirrors from Rome, writing tablets from Greece, tables made of African woods; such a multitude of things that, out of a list of two hundred and fifty kinds of goods sold in the bazaars of Jerusalem and the other towns in those days, over a hundred and thirty were imported from other lands.

Sail as far as they would, however, those ships could find no port that was not part of the Roman Empire, which had made the whole of the Great Sea its own lake. Of that Empire Jesus was a subject. When he was a boy, the Emperor's name was Augustus. Augustus' son, Tiberius, was a boy when Jesus was young and was taught his lessons by a tutor from a Greek city across the Jordan, after which he fought in campaigns in Armenia and Europe. Tiberius became Emperor at Rome when Jesus was about twenty years old. He ruled until after Jesus' death.

That Roman Empire was the greatest that had ever been built up in the history of man. At the south-eastern corner of it were Galilee and Judaea, just as the islands of the Britons were at the north-western corner.

The roads of the Empire, often paved with stone, ran from Rome across Europe and North Africa and even into Asia. The legions of Rome and her pro-consuls and procurators who represented Caesar in Athens and Marseilles, Alexandria and Lyons, York, Carthage, and Jerusalem, marched along these roads to make Roman law obeyed and to impose Roman peace. The language that the educated people talked, in the lands that these roads linked up, was not Latin, but Greek. Rome, the Colossus, thus straddled the world, and imposed everywhere its Romano-Greek civilization, blended of Latin order and discipline and of Hellenic thought and beauty.

Jesus was a carpenter now grown from boyhood to man-

hood in a little city among the hills of a tiny province on the fringe of that Empire.

A Roman ruler was to sentence Jesus to death under charges brought against him by the religious rulers of Jesus' own nation. Yet after a few more years, followers of Jesus, speaking in Greek and writing his story in Greek, would travel down those Roman roads and sail in Roman ships to found a world-empire in Jesus' name—a kingdom that would grow and grow and gather subjects from every nation under heaven, after the last sentinel had crept away from the broken ramparts of the crumbling Roman Empire.

The story of what he was and did and taught we are now to read.

PART III

THE MASTER

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF THE EAGLES

A ROMAN ship came sailing across the Great Sea towards the harbour at Caesarea on the coast of Palestine one day when Jesus was just over thirty years old.

On deck was a man, also just over thirty years of age, dressed in the robe of a Roman ruler. His eyes, his bearing, his very gestures, showed that he was a proud, hot-tempered autocrat whose obstinacy was wedded with a strange wavering weakness. His name (*nomen*) Pontius was that of his well-known ancient Samnite family of Italian blood, which had distinguished itself in Roman history. His *cognomen* (Pilatus) showed that he was descended from military men who had led Roman legions fighting with the pike (or pilatus). His *praenomen*, or more personal name, is unknown. Himself of the equestrian or knightly middle-class of Roman citizens, Pilate had just been appointed by the Emperor Tiberius as Procurator of the Roman Province of Judaea. He was sailing to Caesarea to take over this office from his predecessor, Valerius Gratus, who had held rule there over the Jews for the previous ten years.

Pilate scanned the long, even, sandy coast of the country that he had come to govern. He looked behind that tawny fringe to the grey, broken limestone hills which rose like a barrier behind the coast. These forbidding mountains were a picture of the uphill task that lay ahead of him. For Pilate already knew that the Hebrew people were a proud, independent race. To them their invisible God was King—far above all Emperors. They were restive under foreign rule and defiant of all attempts to bridle them. Pilate had already made up his stubborn, domineering mind to grip them firmly and make them bow to his will. He was soon to receive the shock of his life.

His wife, Claudia Procula, straight from the rich streets

and luxurious villas of Rome, certainly wondered what kind of life awaited her in this strange edge-of-the-world frontier land. If she expected a semi-savage place to live in, her delighted surprise was great when she saw, while still miles from land, the marble of a temple, and the long sweep of a hippodrome on the low hills behind the city of Caesarea. Then she could outline the majestic curves of a vast amphitheatre. In front on the beach was a palace-castle reared on the rugged rock that defies the waves in the centre of the bay. At the south end of the bay rose an exquisite marble Greek theatre. From the Roman city of Crocodilopolis on the Blue River, an aqueduct—like a long caravan of petrified giant camels—carried fresh, cool water to Caesarea across the plain for nearly three miles.

Most marvellous of all, even to an Italian like Pilate, accustomed to the buildings of Rome, was the mole. This was one of the wonders of the world. As their ship drew near to the city, they saw that this breakwater ran in a vast crescent, nearly half a mile long, and was built of stupendous stones. How they were ever carved from the mountains, transported into the water of this bay, and built up so perfectly, baffled Pilate's imagination. Herod the Great had commanded the genius of the architectural engineers of Egypt and the labour of innumerable slaves to achieve it.[1] The top of this immense breakwater was three times as broad as an ordinary Roman road, and from it rose watch-towers of defence. Before Herod the Great built those temples and that amphitheatre and hippodrome, the palace, the theatre, and the mole, the place was a wretched little coast town, with an open roadstead bare to the fury of storms. When Herod died it eclipsed even Jerusalem as a civilized city. It had become the head-quarters of the Roman government and had been named Caesarea in honour of the

[1] The line of this breakwater can still be traced under the sea; while the foundations of the palace-citadel in which Pilate lived are still in the rock. In this citadel, some years later, Paul of Tarsus was imprisoned.

Emperor Augustus. It was called Caesarea Palestina to distinguish it from Caesarea Philippi.

The galley-slaves pulled Pilate's ship past the end of the mole and the steersmen with their tiller-sweeps swung her into the harbour. Pilate and his wife were carried in state palanquins to the castle, which was their home for the next ten years.

Pilate wanted to make a great success of his rule. For Judaea was one of the minor procuratorships in the Roman Empire, given to younger men eager for promotion. It maddened Pilate that the Jews defied the rule that the images of the Emperors should be bowed down to as they were carried with the standards bearing the eagle—the symbol of Rome's might. The law was that all the people must bow down to these images of the Emperor in order to show their submission to the rule of Rome. Jerusalem was the only city in the whole Roman Empire that refused to let these images come within its walls. The Jews were the only folk among the peoples of the Roman world to rebel against this worship.

'There is only one God,' they said, 'and the law says "Thou shalt not make any graven image or likeness".' It was thus blasphemy to bring any such image within the city of God, Jerusalem, and it was a terrible sin to bring it into the Temple. This loathing of the Jews for carved images seemed obstinate fanaticism to any Roman like Pilate. For such a man either believed in a number of gods, like Jupiter, Venus, and the rest, and cared little if another one were added to the catalogue; or believed that there were no gods at all, and so cared nothing what people worshipped or did not worship.

This defiance of Emperor-worship, which stood for loyalty to Rome, stung Pilate's pugnacious, domineering spirit into determination to break the defiant will of the Jews. He would set up the Emperor's image upon the towers of Jerusalem itself. The four procurators who ruled before Pilate had been careful not to bring this nest of hornets about their

heads. Pilate had three thousand soldiers in garrison at Caesarea, beside a cohort at Jerusalem and smaller groups in Samaria and Idumaea. He thought that he could easily break the Jews' will by sheer force.

'Carry the Emperor's image into Jerusalem' he commanded soon after his arrival at Caesarea.[1] So, with the whole of his army, the troops carried the images up the hill-roads to the Holy City. Pilate himself stayed in Caesarea. When the soldiers were outside Jerusalem, the legions went into camp. Then, under cover of night, the soldiers carried the Imperial standards with their images into Jerusalem. They set them up on the battlements of the Tower of Antony, overlooking the very courts of the Temple itself. It was a crafty scheme; for if the Jews attacked the citadel they would be guilty of rebellion against Rome, whereas if they did not attack—then all would be well. So Pilate thought. His eyes were soon to be opened.

When the Jewish worshippers came into the Temple in the morning and saw the offensive images they were horrified and furious. The whole city hummed, like an angered swarm of bees. But what could they do? Swiftly counsel was taken. Annas, the old ex-high priest at Jerusalem, had the subtlest and most penetrating mind in the land. He and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the high-priest, had wills of steel and an awful power of endurance. They neither attacked the Tower of Antony nor accepted Pilate's will. They sent off streams of Jews through the city gate and over the hills north-westward to Caesarea. Five thousand Jews, with not a sword or a javelin among them, were soon on the road. As the news spread, enthusiasts joined them from villages and towns on the way. Day after day they trudged on, until at last, when they had walked sixty miles, the sea was in sight.

Pilate, looking out from his palace roof-garden at Caesarea across the sand-dunes, saw the long line of Jews stretching

[1] See Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XVIII. iii, for the original record of this event.

out for miles. They came toward him like an irresistible creeping tide. They reached Caesarea and swarmed in an enormous crowd in front of Pilate's palace. They sent in a request that he should hear them. He refused. They simply waited. Bowing down with their faces on the ground, they prayed—not to Pilate—but to Jehovah, for the removal of the images, for the changing of Pilate's heart. The next day dawned. Pilate looked out. They were still there. Twenty-four hours more; they still waited, praying to God. So it went on the next day and the next and the next. At last even Pilate's iron nerve was worn down by this terrible, silent, patient waiting of this determined, unarmed multitude of men. The sixth day dawned. Pilate sent word that he would give them audience.

'Go to the hippodrome—the theatre of chariot-races—and wait there', he commanded. 'I will come there and will speak with you.'

At the same time he gave orders to soldiers to surround the people silently, hidden in the hippodrome building. With a crowd of five thousand Jews before him, Pilate from his chair of office on the dais spoke to them across the marble enclosed arena.

'What do you want?' he asked, when he was face to face with the vast crowd.

'Remove the images of Caesar,' they cried.

Pilate, in a rage, rapped out a fierce order. In a flash soldiers who had been hidden at different places in the hippodrome surrounded the crowd with drawn swords in their hands.

'If you persist in your demand, I will order these soldiers to slay you all,' he shouted. Many of the soldiers were Samaritan and Idumaean troops who would greatly have relished the slaughter of a few thousand helpless Jews.

'Whoever will not cease his begging for the images to be removed and will not go home, shall be put to the sword,' Pilate repeated.

There was a moment's silence. Then a Jew cried out.

'I would rather die than have the images stay in Jerusalem.'

He threw himself down and bared his neck. As one man, the thousands of Jews flung themselves on the ground and bared their necks.

'Slay us,' they said, 'we prefer death to seeing God's law broken. We would sooner die by the sword than ever submit to have the images of the Emperor defile the sacred city of Jehovah.'

Looking down on this amazing scene, Pilate was astounded. Then he was bewildered. He had, at last, met something stronger than his will, even when his will was backed by overwhelming armed force. What was he to do? He could, of course, easily carry out his threat and massacre every man in the place. But what would happen if he did so? News of the massacre would fly on wings to the Emperor Tiberius at Rome. Pilate was Caesar's servant. He was barely thirty years old; and was ambitious and at the beginning of his career. Such a report made to Caesar would ruin him. For success in government of a subject people under Rome was measured, not by massacre, but by peace and contentment. Furthermore, Pilate had to-day only a few thousand Jews to deal with. What would happen when, at the Passover, over a million, burning with holy wrath at seeing the images, would face him with this awful, invincible, adamant will?

What could Pilate do? He was baffled. He was cowed. He was beaten. He gave way.

It was rare indeed that the eagles of Rome were defeated. They were, however, that day. Pilate ordered his soldiers to sheathe their swords. He was forced, finally, to give the further command that was gall and wormwood to his proud Roman spirit.

'Remove the images of the Emperor from Jerusalem,' he said.

He gave the order sullenly, with smouldering rage in his heart. For he was horribly humiliated. He knew that

every soldier under his command and every Jew in the land would soon be grinning at his discomfiture. The news that Pilate was outwitted and dominated by a stronger will would spread everywhere. The will of the man to whom Caesar had given power of life and death in Judaea was conquered. And it was broken, not by force of arms, but by the unconquerable spirit of men who counted it far better to die by the sword than to disobey what they believed to be the Law given them by their God.

This strange battle of Pilate's will with that of the Jews was only one scene in a colossal drama. That drama was the battle of the imperial power of the mightiest Empire in the world against the adamant national will of a people founded on the rock of God's Eternal Law. In one of those scenes three years later the Jews with, again, Annas and Caiaphas as their brain and will, broke Pilate's will and Jesus was killed. That drama was now to move on from scene to dreadful scene till it leapt to its climax in hideous and irreparable tragedy—the Temple in ruins; Jerusalem crushed by Rome; the Jewish people scattered to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER XV

THE STORMY VOICE

WHILE Pilate from the battlements of his palace at Caesarea Palestina was nursing his wounded pride, and Jesus, barely thirty miles away, in the carpenter's workshop in Nazareth, was reflecting on a wider empire than Rome and a truer kingdom than that for which the Jewish people were waiting, another young man of about their age —tormented with ungovernable longing for that Rule of God to come in Judaea itself, gave stormy and passionate voice to a vehement message for the nation.

He told of a wonderful new day that was coming, and called men to change their lives in order to be fit to serve in the new Kingdom. What he said brought young men from all over the land coursing along the hill-roads and the valleys to listen to him.

His name was John. He was barely three months older than Jesus. He was born some sixty miles south of Nazareth in a hill town of Judaea not far from Jerusalem. His father was Zacharias, a lovable and dignified old priest who served during some weeks of each year in the Temple at Jerusalem. Zacharias chanted a new song when his son John was born. In it was all the longing of the people that God would send a son of the line of David, who would right wrongs and free the nation. He sang the longing:

> 'That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,
> May serve God without fear,
> In holiness and justice before him
> All the days of our life . . .
> To give light to them that sit in darkness
> And in the shadow of death,
> To guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Zacharias was of an ancient priestly family and his good wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron himself. As John

listened as a boy to the talk of his father and mother with their friends in their home on the hills of Judaea, his spirit caught fire. Zacharias and Elizabeth and their friends talked—as did Joseph and Mary in the home at Nazareth and thousands of other Jews who feared God and cared for their native land—of the wonderful good time coming when the Prince-Messiah would be sent to them by Jehovah and the rule of God—the Kingdom of Heaven—would be among them.

As the growing boy, John, looked around him, he saw no Rule of God. He saw, instead, the poor ground between the terrible millstones of Rome's taxes, the Temple dues, and local levies. He saw Annas growing immensely rich at the expense of the people. He saw the soldiery of Rome and of Herod Antipas (Rome's underling in Galilee) commandeering food beyond their just rations. The people groaned and writhed, but they could do nothing. The population increased, but the land was no more fruitful than before; so the taxes were like a rick of hay loaded upon a camel—a back-breaking burden that did not feed the creature who carried it. Each man had less power to pay at the very time when the taxes increased beyond all justice or reason. Indeed, these taxes themselves took almost a third of a man's whole livelihood.

When a man had starved his family to pay his taxes, what did the money support? The tribute to Caesar supported the rule of a heathen alien Emperor through a pagan procurator. This yoke galled the proud neck of the Jews, who owned no king save God. The Temple taxes supported the enormously rich Annas and his sons and son-in-law Caiaphas, as well as over twenty thousand priests who ministered in the Temple. One priest gave sometimes only one week's service in a year; but he took his wages every week! John's fiery spirit longed for the world to be put right. When would the Prince-Messiah come? What, indeed, would his rule be like?

The revolutionaries were ready to give John an immediate

answer to his longing. Take up arms against the Romans and fight to a finish! That was their programme. But John saw that the sins of his own nation were as heavy a burden as the rule of the Romans, and that they themselves must stop doing evil if they would be ready for the reign of God. He burned with a fire of revolution; but the change that he wanted was in the hearts as well as the deeds of men. He wanted to find out what was right. To do that he must get away alone with God.

So John the son of Zacharias left his home, strode out on the rocky hill-paths where the jackals prowled, and plunged into the solitude of the wilderness. He renounced his right to enter the priesthood in the Temple. That Temple life would have brought him honour and security, a good salary, rich robes, splendid jewels. But he turned his young back on that to walk on the barren rocky hills and seek stern truth among the wild beasts in trackless sandy wastes of the desert. A volcano suddenly bursting into flame through the smiling fields of a peaceful valley would not be more startling than that this shaggy, fiery, impetuous rebel should be the offspring of the quiet, kindly old priest and his saintly, gracious wife.

Taking his staff, John set out eastward. The ridge of the hills of Judaea was soon left behind. His sandals swept the coarse grass and the broom of the rolling hills and the dry valleys. Then—as he strode on—the scorched grass and the thistles gave way to the stunted thorn-bushes of the desert. The creepers thrust their deep roots into the rock-crevices to hunt for the tiniest drops of moisture. The brown and yellow sand and the crumbling limestone broke under the shock of his stride. As far as eye could see was tawny desolate desert. The twisted hills and stark arid ridges threw the heat of the sun back into John's face as through an open furnace door.

Jeshimon, or 'Devastation', he remembered, was the old and fitting name the prophets gave to this tortured rubble of rock, shingle, and sand—the Wilderness of Judaea. Stumbling

over the loose turmoil of splintered stone he went on till night fell. Over and around him, as he lay there resting, swung the silent stars—the seven stars of the Great Bear and the Belt of Orion, and all the rest.

At the first gleam of dawn, John looked out east. At his feet the land broke into a precipitous chaos of crags and ravines that tumbled wildly down twelve hundred feet to the Jordan and to the darkly shining gleam of the Dead Sea. Away beyond rose the hills of Moab—silhouetted against the dawn that flamed across from the farther desert. Inevitably the words that he knew well would come into his mind, words sung on these very crags by Amos, the herdsman-prophet:

> 'Lo, he that formeth the mountains,
> And createth the wind,
> And declareth unto man what is his thought;
> That maketh the morning darkness,
> And treadeth on the high places of the earth,
> Jehovah, God of Hosts, is his name;
> That maketh the Seven Stars and Orion,
> And turneth the shadow of death into morning;
> And maketh the day dark with night,
> That calleth for the waters of the sea,
> And poureth them on the face of the earth—
> Jehovah is his name.'

John listened in the desert for what this God—Lord of the Universe—would say to his soul. He lived on the sparse food that he could find in this wilderness—the wild honey from a hole in a lightning-riven tree; the flying locusts that strip the fertile land but are cooked as food by the Bedouin of the desert. He threw aside his clothes of fair linen. His only protection from the sun and the rain, from the rocks and the stunted thorn bushes, was a Bedouin tunic woven of tawny camel-hair strapped about his waist with a leather girdle. His face was scorched by the hot, dry wind of the desert.

No one knows how long John lived in the desert. He

thought about his nation and God and the future. He dreamed of a good and great time to come when One sent by God would right wrongs and bring in God's Kingdom. He saw, at last, quite clearly, that the love, the goodness, and the stern judgement of God are one and the same. The judgement that condemns the wickedness of men is the same holy love that cares for them like a shepherd. The Messiah, John was certain, must be coming to bring in God's reign over men. To be ready for the Messiah, men must not sharpen their swords or take up their javelins, but repent and have clean hearts.

The burning words that John knew so well leapt from his lips as he looked over the desert with its winding hills and twisted valleys and thought how like all this wilderness was to the life of men in his land and in his day:

> 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
> Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
> Make his paths straight.
> Every valley shall be filled,
> And every mountain and hill shall be brought low,
> And the crooked shall be made straight,
> And the rough ways smooth;
> And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'

It burned in his bones that he, John, was that Voice. He must go and tell this message to every one who would hear. So he plunged over the edge of the wilderness down the paths of the wild goat and the jackal, into the plain of Jordan. He spoke in its cities like Jericho and in its villages like Bethshan. His stormy voice rang in the ears of the merchant and the peasant, the soldier and the scribe, the labourer and the tax-gatherer.

What did the people see as John spoke? A lean, vehement, fiery young rebel spirit, tanned by the wind and the rain, toughened in sinew by walking the hills. They saw a light in his eyes that came of long watching under the stars through the night of evil until dawn shone on the hills and in his soul.

John stood on the banks of the Jordan by the ford. There the camel-caravans crossed from the lands of the East. It was a centre to which many paths came. Boulders were scattered about his feet. Trees felled by the woodmen were lying on the edge of the copse. The brushwood was all dry and scorched in the heat. These things gave him the pictures for his burning message to the thousands of folk who thronged about him from every side. The flame of a little fire on which a group cooked their food caught the brushwood. In a trice scorpions, lizards, and serpents that had lain hidden, writhed out and raced away to escape the burning.

'You brood of vipers,' cried John, swinging round to a group of Pharisees and Sadducees who were watching and listening, 'who warned *you* to flee from the coming wrath? Bring forth fruits that are equal to your repentance. Do not you Jews begin to say in your hearts, "We have Abraham as our Father". I tell you that God can raise up children to Abraham out of these river-ford boulders. And even now' (pointing to the woodmen at work) 'the axe is laid at the root of the trees. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is hewn down and used for firewood.'

'What, then, must we do?' asked one in the throng of people.

'If you have two coats,' he replied, 'give to the man who has none. Divide your food in the same way.'

'What must we do, master?' asked a group of tax-collectors.

'Do not demand more than the regulation taxes,' he replied at once. That was indeed a startling change to make!

A company of soldiers then approached him.

'And we,' they asked, 'what must we do?'

'Do not force money from people. Never make a false charge, but be content with your pay.'

In every case he told the people to change, not their livelihood, but their way of living; go on with their present work, but to do it as to a God of Justice and Mercy. He told them to earn their living honestly and justly and to do good. That was the simple but difficult way, within the reach of every

one, for each man to work his repentance in practice and to bring in the Reign of God.

The news of the Prophet and of his burning words echoed through the land. Not for two centuries had men heard such things said. From Jerusalem to Hebron, from Bethlehem, and indeed all the hill-country of Judaea, the people came hastening down the paths and roads. Some came simply from curiosity. Most of the people came, however, because they felt tingling within them the desire for the coming of a New Age, the wish that the Anointed—the Christ—should come and make life new for them, and bring in the Reign of Heaven.

When a man repented and told his sins and said that he wished to live a new life, John took him by the hand and plunged him into the waters of the running Jordan. He did this as a symbol of the washing away of evil. If a Jordan shepherd bought a sheep from another shepherd, he took it down to the river and, plunging it under the running water, washed off the old mark that told who had been the owner, and then put the new owner's mark on the sheep. Just so John took these folk who gave up their old ways and wanted to be God's true flock, and plunged them into the river as a symbol of the washing away of the old mastership of evil. The clean water washing over the man was the outward act corresponding to the inner reality of the grace of God cleansing his heart and giving him a new spirit ready for service in the new Kingdom. This baptizing—as it was called—meant repenting and throwing off sin. It also meant preparing for the new King and his kingdom. So when the people whispered to one another—'This is the Messiah, Christ', John at once said:

> 'No, I baptize you with water for repentance
> But he who is coming after me is mightier,
> And I am not fit even to carry his sandals;
> He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
> His winnowing fan is in his hand.

'His wheat he will gather into his granary; but the chaff he shall burn.'

Women near Jezreel sifting grain from chaff. The wheat is put into the granary dome made of mud and straw in the background. Such of the chaff as is not blown away is burned.

He will clean out his threshing-floor,
His wheat he will gather into the granary,
But the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.'

Never since the far-off great days of Amos with his cry for justice and mercy; of Jeremiah with his scathing blame of the greedy oppressors of the people; or of Isaiah with his trumpet-notes of hope and challenge, had such a voice been heard in the land. They must not any longer, he declared, depend on God showing favouritism for one race—the folk descended from Abraham. They must not expect obedience to ritual-law alone to save them. Nothing short of a new heart creating a new life in which God ruled was needed. Share your goods, do not oppress or cheat, obey in everything the voice of God, which he will speak through his Anointed; that was the simple, drastic revolutionary message of John.

The fire of his message swept the land; for the people longed for the Kingdom. Young men from all sides hurried to hear him, and, having caught the flame from John, threw in their lot with him. Disciples multiplied with such speed and spread over the world so widely that ten years later they were found in Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt.[1] Roman soldiers stood listening. The high priest, Caiaphas, and his father-in-law, Annas, took alarm and, in consultation with the Sanhedrin, sent a deputation hurrying down the road from Jerusalem through Jericho to the Jordan to see whether what threatened to become a national movement of repentance and hope was dangerous to the politics of the Temple rulers.

Even Herod Antipas, looking out from the terraced gardens of the Golden Palace that his father, Herod the Great, had built on the hill-side above Tiberias, began to take alarm. For John was in his territory. What if he set the people aflame and created a revolution. Herod Antipas' spies brought word of the enormous crowds listening to John in the Jordan valley; of their feverish excitement and John's

[1] Acts xviii. 24; and xix 3.

talk of the coming of a new Prince or King who would bring in God's rule in Palestine. Antipas, an Idumaean by birth,[1] was of Jewish blood, though not of pure race. He knew, therefore, how the longing for the Messiah was bound up with revolutionary movements, especially among the hot-headed youth of his own territory of Galilee. Would it not be wise—he wondered—to silence John by arresting him?

As thunder echoes from mountain to mountain, so the voice of John reverberated in every hill and valley in Judaea and Galilee. Young farmers pruning their vines, shepherds leading their sheep, men ploughing and sowing on the hill-sides, and women at home turning the handle of their small stone mills or gossiping at the water-spring, talked with glowing eyes of the new prophet who had broken the long silence when no prophets spoke, and said that the Kingdom was coming. At the north end of the Lake of Galilee young patriotic fishermen were thrilled by what they heard of the new prophet. So stirred were they that some of them left their boats and nets and walked swiftly southward along the lake-side and down the Jordan valley till they came to the 'House of the Ford', Bethabara, where John was. As they listened, they were captured by the vision and the fire of John. They gave themselves to him as disciples and were baptized in the Jordan.

The rumour of the teaching of John went up the hill-ways. In Nazareth, as in a hundred other towns and villages, men and women were asking—'What does John say?' So Jesus in his workshop heard the things that John spoke. He heard again the words of Isaiah which every one knew by heart and which John was using to describe himself:

> 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness,
> Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
> Make his paths straight.
> . . . . . .'

[1] Idumaea was south of the Dead Sea. Its people were of Jewish blood, but mixed with that of other races.

'At last he came to the banks of the Jordan.'

Ancient bridge—Jasr-el-Mejamie—over the Jordan between Bethabara, where John was, and the Lake of Galilee, looking north-west toward the Galilean hills in which Nazareth is hidden.

'The Kingdom of God is at hand', he cried, 'at hand, here at your very doors.'

The land was aflame with the proclamation: 'Repent, for the Kingdom—the Kingdom is at hand.' For that call the preparation of years and the voice of God in his heart had made Jesus ready. Even as a boy he had heard the call to be about his Father's business. It had deepened in the hill-top thoughts and communion with God under the night sky. The talks at home about the Rule of God had taken root and grown. The words of the prophets had burned in his soul. Now the glowing certainty flamed in him that the hour had at last come. Deep called to deep. He could stay no longer within the narrow circle of his hills.

For the last time Jesus shook the shavings from his tunic. He handed over the workshop to James and Jude and Simeon, now full-grown young men. He said 'Good-bye' to his sisters. He took the embrace of his mother. Then he strode over the brow of the hill never again to come back to live in his old home. He plunged down the steep path into the Plain of Esdraelon and right across the paths through its eastern barley fields towards Mount Gilboa. He turned due east into the Gap of Jezreel and so went quickly down into the heats of the Jordan.

At last he came to the banks of the Jordan and moved along the paths towards the ford where the crowds surrounded John. He drew near to John and spoke to him. 'Will you baptize me?' he said. John, by swift, unerring insight, and it may well be by earlier personal knowledge of Jesus, knew that here was one who had no need for repentance.

'No,' said John, 'I need to be baptized by you, yet you come to me.'

So John tried to prevent Jesus.

'Come,' replied Jesus, 'this is how we should fulfil all our duty to God.'

So John gave way. He took Jesus into the water and baptized him. As Jesus rose out of the water a wonderful experi-

ence broke in upon him. It was so marvellous, so deep, so transforming, that no words can carry its splendour. God's spirit, soft-winged and peaceful and swift as a dove, came into Jesus' soul. In his ears he heard, as from the lips of the Almighty Father, the Creator of the Universe:

'Thou art my Son, the Beloved.
In thee is my delight.'

CHAPTER XVI

ALONE AMONG WILD BEASTS

THE swift, cool waters of the Jordan swirled around Jesus as he stepped out from the river up the boulder-strewn beach of the ford. The warm sunshine of the valley shone on his head and on his body, still glistening from the stream. The stir of the excited multitude was around him, the hum of their voices on the banks and in the water. Everything was the same; but everything was different.

It was the decisive hour of Jesus' life.

One thing was real to him. In his ears the words still rang as with the very voice of God:

> 'Thou art my Son, the Beloved,
> In thee is my delight.'

All the certainty in his life as a boy that God was Father—'My Father'; all the visions of his young manhood of the Messiah who would come to show the Father to his estranged children, burned now in one white flame of truth. That saying in Jesus' ears, 'Thou art my Son,' was the Voice of the Eternal—the Maker of the Universe—speaking to him, as Father to Son. He was God's Son. He was to go into the world of men and proclaim to them the Good News—that God, the Father of them all, willed to call all men and women, boys and girls, into the Kingdom of His Love. It had come swift as the wind—this new and sudden adventure. Yet it was the natural climax of his boyhood. The opening of a bud into full blossom at the call of the sun is sudden and new, yet is a natural and simple unfolding of all that had grown in the bud. So it was now. This Voice of God in Jesus brought the swift unfolding to perfection of all that had been in him already as a boy and through the years of growing.

The clear, shining certainty was there. He, Jesus, the master-carpenter, from the hidden hill-city in the Roman

tetrarchy of Galilee, was to bring to these people, to his country, to the world, the Good News of the Kingdom of God. He himself was the One Sent—the Messiah.

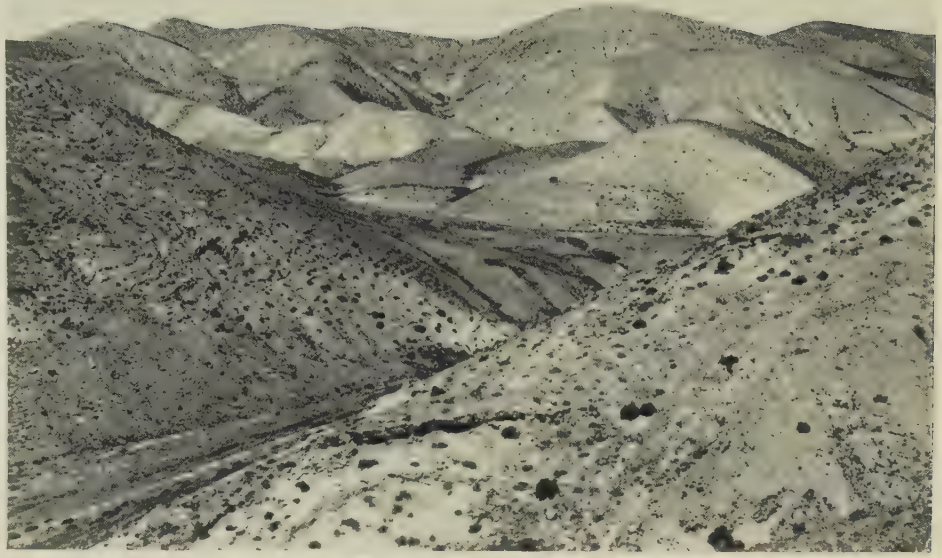
What must be the first step? He must find some place where he could be alone to see his pathway clear. He must go away from all these voices of men to listen to the One Voice. But whither? Ahead of him to the west the precipices of the wilderness lifted themselves, wild and silent, a desert of burnt hills and riven gorges. For some thirty miles from north to south and fifteen miles across, there was not a well-spring nor a village in all its length and breadth—a place of solitude. There he could, indeed, be alone with the Voice. So Jesus turned his face to the precipitous fronts of those blunt, forbidding hills.

He walked rapidly along a path that went through the thickets and the fields of the valley. The way soon began to rise and curve towards one of the scoured ravines that cleave the sheer eastern edge of the wilderness of Judaea. Jesus climbed steadily. The tracks of men faded away. Even the goat trails ceased in the waste of crumbling stone. The day drew on, and the shadows in the ravine deepened to a glowing indigo as the sun went down behind the broken hills.

Night fell.

The sides of the gorge loomed over him, harsh and shelterless. Only the section of sky above him framed by the precipices on either side held the familiar light of a few of the stars that he knew well. A howl like the terrible laughter of drunken demons shattered the silence. The jackals were out. 'He was alone with the wild beasts.' Gaunt, tawny hyenas prowled along the gorge side, smelling their way down to the valley in search of prey. The hoot of an owl haunted the night.

With a stone as a pillow—foodless, homeless, alone—Jesus lay down. Yet not really 'homeless'. For he had that day heard the Voice of the Creator of this earth and of those stars saying—'Thou art my Son'. In this desert place and with no



THE WILDERNESS OF TEMPTATION

'Wild and silent, a desert of burnt hills and riven gorges.'

PLATE XI

company save beasts of prey, he was still at home. For he could not escape from his Father's House. He could never be 'alone' whose Father was everywhere. Nor even 'foodless' when he knew that man lives not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

The words that he had learned from the Sacred Scrolls as a boy came back to him in that terrible desert place. Indeed, every word that he spoke in the days there came straight from the books that he had read and listened to in the synagogue, and had learned by heart at home and in school.

As he lay down there on the rocks that night the words came back to him:

'Thou art my Son, in whom is my delight.'

'My Son,' the Son of God. John the Baptist at the ford of Jordan had spoken of the coming of the Messiah-Prince, sent by God. The hope of his coming had drawn the thousands of people from every corner of the country to hear and see John.

'No,' answered John to those who asked if he himself were the Messiah, 'I am not that one. But one comes after me . . .'

Jesus knew now that he was that one—the Son of God. The Voice in his ears echoed the certainty in his soul. He was God's Son; his Messiah. In those days in the wilderness Jesus fought out a tense battle as to what he was to be and to do. What he decided in the wilderness led straight to the tragedy that lay ahead. For what he was, what he did, was new, utterly revolutionary, and creative. What he said was radically different from what the Jewish nation, whether fiery patriots or learned scribes or Temple priests, expected or desired in their Messiah. So, what he decided in the wilderness led him to shock their devotion, disappoint their hopes, shatter their ambition; and led them to kill him.

What, then, did the people expect the Messiah, the Son of God, to be and to do?

A prince riding in armour at the head of troops, from victory to victory, driving the Romans into the sea and setting up a glorious empire over all, with God's power like a radiance

shining over him, making him irresistible. That was one patriotic picture which inflamed the minds of thousands. Others had deeper thoughts that came out of the words that they heard on the Sabbath, and had learned in school. They wanted a ruler who would set up his throne in Jerusalem as David had done, and would rule from the sea to the desert, putting down cruelty and injustice and making the will of God the rule of all the life of the people.

That hope was like a fiery furnace in which the rough ore of the Jewish people's passion for freedom was fused and then beaten to shape and use by the hammer of suffering on the anvil of daily living. When a Jew in the Temple Courts at Jerusalem looked up at the Roman soldiers on the battlements of the Tower of Antony and remembered the ancient glories of the thrones of David and Solomon in Jerusalem, that furnace of hope burned with a whiter light, blown in the wind of desire. Every time that Jew remembered with repentance the divisions and the wickedness in his own nation—the rich who ground the faces of the poor, the coarse who broke the law of purity and of holiness, then that flame burned with a whiter light.

The picture of this coming Messiah had, for centuries, been growing more vivid and clear. The great seer-prophet Daniel, in far-away Babylon when the Jews were enslaved in exile there, dreamed of a Messiah who should break the power of Assyria. Daniel called the Assyrian tyrant 'the Beast'. The coming Prince, he called 'the Son of Man'. Daniel sang, in words that Jesus knew by heart:

> 'I beheld even till the Beast was slain
> And his body destroyed,
> And given to the burning flame . . .
> I saw in the night visions,
> And behold, one like the Son of Man came
> With the clouds of heaven,
> And came to the Ancient of Days,
> And they brought him near before him,

And there was given him a dominion,
And glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and languages
Should serve him:
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Centuries of turmoil passed. Then freedom was won under Judas the Maccabee, followed, however, by the new Rule of Rome. So, in the last century before Jesus was born, the thought of the Messiah, the Son of Man, flamed in songs such as those collected later in the Book of Enoch. This writer sang of the Son of Man as:

'A being whose countenance had the appearance of a man
And his face was full of graciousness, like one of the holy angels.
And I asked the angel who went with me and showed me all the hidden things,
Concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was . . .
And he answered and said unto me:
That is the Son of Man, who hath righteousness,
With whom dwelleth righteousness,
And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is hidden,
Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him.
And whose lot hath the pre-eminence before the Lord of Spirits in uprightness forever.
And this Son of Man whom thou hast seen
Shall raise up the Kings and the mighty from their seats,
And shall loosen the reins of the strong,
And break the teeth of the sinners . . .
And the earth shall rejoice
And the righteous shall dwell upon it,
And the elect shall walk thereon.'

These were the pictures that Jesus himself knew well—the pictures of 'the Son of Man', that strange title which, out of all the names that he might have taken as God's leader, Jesus chose for his own. Out there in the wild desert place,

alone at night under the stars, these pictures came back to him.

There were two other such word-pictures that he knew by heart. In them both were almost the very words that he had heard as he went down into the waters of the Jordan: 'Thou art my Son in whom is my delight.' The first came to his memory in these words:

'Behold my servant whom I uphold;
My chosen in whom my soul delighteth;
I have put my spirit upon him:
He shall bring forth justice to the Nations.
He shall not cry, nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And the smoking flax shall he not quench.
He shall bring forth judgement in truth.
He shall not fail, nor be discouraged,
Till he have set judgement in the earth:
And the isles shall wait for his law.'

The other song came, too, that had words similar to those he had heard in the Jordan that morning. It ran like this:

'The Lord said unto me, "Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I will give thee the Nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."'

In what real way could the 'uttermost parts of the earth' belong to Jesus? How could 'the Nations' in the world come to be his? That was the question that came to him with a strange voice of tempting up there in the wilderness. That world-rule could only come in one of two ways. Either he must by force of arms conquer the nations, or reign by the free, loving obedience of people everywhere.

The first way—the way of Empire—seemed glorious to the fighting spirit of fiery young Galileans who were among Jesus' acquaintance in Nazareth. Julius Caesar had taken that

broad, enchanting road of world-empire only fifty years before Jesus was born. The second way of world-rule was silent and had no shock of battle, no splendour of palaces, and no pomp of conquerors; but it would need greater courage, a more wonderful heroism, a fortitude that would never flinch. That way meant that Jesus' throne should not be in any one place in any one capital of any single land. His throne would be in the lives of boys and girls, men and women. He would reign in all nations who wished to do as he willed. All who were ready to live as children of the same Father would be his empire. The citizens of his kingdom would be those who had his spirit.

Those were the two alternative ways of world-rule. Jesus must now decide which one to take.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DECISIVE BATTLE

THROUGH the cool of the night under the stars 'alone with the wild beasts', Jesus watched and thought. As the first level fingers of light pointed across the desert from the East, Jesus rose and walked over the broken rocky hills—thinking.

He was alone.

No bird sang; only some carrion-hunting vulture circled the sky in its search for a dead or dying animal or man. No living creature walked by day, for the beasts of prey slept in their holes. There was no shade of tree; only the rare shelter of some rock in the weary land. He had had no food to eat; no water to drink save—at dawn—the few drops of night-dew on his tunic with which to cool his tongue and lips. He saw no one. The sun rose until its rays beat down like sword-strokes. The reflected heat began to glow like a furnace from the stones, the boulders, and the loose rubble and sand of the desert. Noonday turned to afternoon and at last the sun went down in crimson flame over the western edge of the wilderness. So night followed day and day followed night till the days and nights lengthened into weeks.

Jesus was still thinking. He did nothing. Yet in those days he began to fight his great decisive battle. In wave upon wave the forces of evil beat against him—again and again, and yet again.

They beat, first, upon his body. He saw ahead of him a campaign that would tax all his strength. He must keep his physical strength if he was really to be the Messiah —the Prince from God—for whom the people were waiting all over the land. For many days now Jesus had eaten nothing; his body was starved for food. He was faint with hunger and with thirst under the scorching sun. The Voice of God at the Jordan had said:

'Thou art my Son.'

It was on the echo of these words that the testing, the tempting, began. 'The Son of God.'

'Are you sure? "The Son of God"—and faint with hunger! Better test it, and be fed.'

There all around him lay the flat stones, splintered by the heat, like petrified loaves.

'If you *are* the Son of God,' said the voice in his ear, 'command that these stones become loaves.'

Why not?

Jesus knew, however, that if he was to do what he was setting himself to do; if he was to live the life of the Kingdom of God so that any man following him might live it, he must not work any miracle that would free himself from facing every difficulty and hardship that ordinary men must meet. Indeed, he must not satisfy any craving of his own body in supernatural ways. He must be tested in every point like any other man. Nor must he by miracle even give material help to any one else in order to win his own way. He must (as all men must) live by doing the things that God told them in their consciences to do.

The picture flashed into his mind of that other wilderness across which his people had been led many centuries ago, and where they had been hungry and thirsty, as he was now. But food had come to them from God—manna. Moses had stayed in Mount Sinai for forty days without food or drink. The people had gone hungry in the desert. Why? The answer was given in the story as told in the Scroll of Deuteronomy—words that Jesus knew by heart.[1]

'And God suffered thee to hunger . . .
That he might make thee know
That man doth not live by bread alone,
But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

Jesus' decision was taken. He could not, would not, use God to satisfy his own physical needs. To use supernatural powers in order to make food for himself would have lifted

[1] Deuteronomy viii. 3.

him above the needs of ordinary men. He would not have been fully man, the brother of all other men.

So he answered the tempting voice with the old reply that takes new creative meaning from the lips of Jesus:

'Man shall not live by bread alone,
But by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The first attack of the battle had been delivered by the enemy and Jesus had won.

The greater question still pressed for an answer. How was Jesus to begin his work of leadership among this people? They were expecting a Prince with the powers of God in his hand. How could Jesus get the people to accept his teaching? Some wonderful dramatic act in the very centre of the Jewish faith would draw every one's attention to him.

Over the edge of the desert, on the ridge of limestone to the north-west, the city of Jerusalem lay. On the very crest of the ridge, like a snow-white mountain of stone, the Temple stood. Here was the centre of the life of the Jewish nation. In the Temple court thousands of people thronged and the leaders of the nation taught. It was the most public place in the world for such a demonstration.

The Tempting Spirit took him in imagination to the pinnacle of the Temple, the corner turret above the Royal Cloisters that towered above the Brook Kidron. With devilish subtlety the Tempting Voice went back once more to the words spoken in the Voice of God at the Jordan:

'Thou art my Son.'

'If you *are* the "Son of God", cast yourself down.'

Then, with fiendish cleverness, the Tempter took Jesus' own quotation that man must live 'by the word of God'. Satan quoted the word of God—one of the Psalms.[1] 'It is written,' said the Voice:

'He shall give his angels charge over thee.
They shall bear thee up in their hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'

[1] Psalm xci. 11.

Why not use his power as Son of God to do a miraculous thing to startle people and to awe them into obedience so that he could get their ear and teach them his truth? Why not? If he flung himself from the roof of the Temple, whence the people below looked like midgets; and if, by the power of God, his fall was stopped and he did not crash to instant death, the crowds would listen to him as one from Heaven. Then he could say: 'I am Messiah,' and all the world would be at his feet. It was a temptation to test God and to reveal his own Sonship to the world in a spectacular way. It was a temptation to win the nation to follow him as Messiah by forcing the hand of God to make a sensational proof that he was on Jesus' side. It was a temptation to make a short cut to power by miracle.

Jesus' mind again flashed to the same part of the same Scroll of Deuteronomy from which he had answered the Tempter. He once more quoted words that had been spoken by the Eternal to Moses on the Mount.

'Again,' he said, 'it is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God".[1] You must not test or put to proof the Lord your God.'

Jesus had won the second battle.

Pacing through the wilderness, he came out on the crest of the mountain-cliff that towers above the Jordan valley. Away to the east, beyond those hills of Moab that rose before him across the purple mists of the Jordan, stretched the vast, rich lands that had ruled the world—the lands of Assyria and Babylon by the Tigris and the Euphrates; and beyond Mesopotamia the high tableland of the Empire of Persia. Northward Jesus could see the road that ran up to Damascus and Antioch and the other great cities. To the west (beyond the ridge of the Judaean hills) there lay the Great Sea, which had become the lake of the Roman Empire, with Egypt and all the cities and wheatfields of North Africa; and Greece with the beauty of Athens and Corinth; and

[1] Deuteronomy vi. 16.

Italy. The might and majesty of Rome ruled from the soil on which Jesus stood right across to the Atlantic Ocean.

So Jesus could see the frontiers of the empires of the world. His mind's eye swept across the earth.

If he was to bring in the Rule of God, why not try the way of Empire and domination? Why not follow in the footsteps of great rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, who had come across that eastern desert out of Mesopotamia; or like the Pharaohs, whose generals had led their armies to Palestine from Egypt. Jesus had heard as a boy of the rule of those Empires of Babylon and of Assyria, of Egypt, Persia, and Greece, in his history books (the Books of Samuel and of the Kings); his poetry book (the Psalms); and the books of the great seers (like Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel). Indeed, the story of his people was largely of fighting against or being subject to those great empires. And now Jesus himself was living under the rule of the greatest of them all—Rome. Why not build, with God's might, a greater Empire than Rome? He might be World-Emperor! The vision flashed on him in a moment of time. And the Tempting Voice said:

> 'To you will I give all this rule, and the glory.
> For it has been put into my hands,
> And to whomsoever I may give it.
> It shall be yours if you will worship me.'

To refuse might mean failure and death. For if Jesus refused to grasp world-power by the ways of Satan, there was only one other way to try to have world-rule. That way was to try to build a kingdom of love among all men. That would certainly be a very lonely way. To walk in that way by oneself among all the hates and selfish ambitions of priests like Annas and Caiaphas and of a procurator like Pilate and the cruelty of common men—that would be an heroic struggle against odds. As sure as night follows day, it would clash in dreadful combat with the Jewish passionate patriotism for a national Messiah. So Jesus made the great decision. He rejected world-empire.

'It is written,' he said, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve".'

To fight these temptations was a real battle. Otherwise the forty days would have held no temptation; no testing. It is no sin to be tempted, but to let temptation dictate terms.

His third battle with the Tempter was now won. The Voice ceased. The Tempter left Jesus—for a time. Faint yet triumphant, Jesus rested. He now saw his way. He must begin at once. He must tell the truth of this Kingdom. He would take his way of Love. He would use no powers that God was not ready to give to any men who had complete faith in him. He would work no wonders and signs by supernatural powers for the sake of himself. He would live and die for the vision of a world-kingdom of the Spirit of Love.

Jesus strode down the steep ways out of the desert into the great valley of the Jordan.

CHAPTER XVIII

YOUNG FISHERMEN

IT was early spring.[1] Jesus, glowing with that grave radiance of spirit which comes in the sense of victory after strong temptation, turned his back upon the wilderness, and swung down the broken goat-paths. From the stark, stony hills he dropped towards the Jordan valley. Taking a track north-eastward, he left the marble amphitheatre and the new palace at Jericho down below on his right. Next morning, as dawn broke over the majestic hills of Gilead across Jordan, he took the way to the North along the Jordan valley.

That valley drops, not gradually, but by successive steeps and flats, carved in the soil by the centuries, until at last the steaming jungle leads down to the river bank.

He knew that lions and leopards roamed in the tangled thorn and tamarisk-brake of that jungle. Buffaloes wallowed and wild boars rooted in the ooze and slime near the river banks; while deadly serpents glided among the tussocks of rank grass. It was the overflow bed of the Jordan, which, in a few weeks, would be a riot of tumbling waters from the snows of Hermon, sweeping dead driftwood on its surface and fleeing animals from its path. No wonder the people named the river 'the Jordan', that is, the 'Down-comer', for it swept all before it at that time. No wonder, too, that they called this overflow 'the Pride of Jordan,' when, swollen beyond its proper limits, it roared and rolled through the jungle.

Jesus went down the paths toward the place where, six weeks ago, he had left John by the waterside. John was still at the ford. With him, apart from the crowds who came to hear him, were the disciples whom he was teaching. Jesus was drawn irresistibly back to the Jordan. He wished to see and hear John again. He wanted to revisit the river in which

[1] Probably A.D. 28.

his great experiences reached him, when the Voice of God in his soul had said: 'Thou art my Son.' Jesus wanted, above all, to share his vision in the comradeship of the young men of John's discipleship.

That afternoon he waded across the ford and found lodging in the village of Bethabara, the House of the Ford, on the western bank of the Jordan. On the day after the Sabbath, John was standing talking with two of his followers, named Andrew and John. They were bronzed, sturdy young fishermen who sailed their boats and threw their nets for a livelihood on the Lake of Galilee. Andrew, whose name, meaning 'manly', was Greek—and so was unusual in a Jew, was born (as was his brother Simon) at a village called 'Fisher-home' (Bethsaida).[1] Bethsaida was some thirty miles north of Bethabara. It was a fishing village at the north end of the Lake of Galilee. John lived there, too, with his brother James in the home of their father, Zebedee, and their mother, Salome. Zebedee owned fishing-boats and his young sons mended nets and fished in the company of their father.

They were hot-blooded young patriots with a passion in their blood for the kingdom, who had come to the Jordan valley, as Jesus had done, to hear the teaching of John. What John the Baptist had said had fired some of them with such enthusiasm that they decided to be followers of his. They enlisted as his disciples, as did many of the young men of the busy towns and villages by the lake who had hurried south to listen to his message.

'Look,' said John the Baptist to Andrew and John of Bethsaida that afternoon, as Jesus was walking about a little way off. The vehement voice that had denounced the Pharisees as a 'brood of vipers' took on an unaccustomed note of awe. 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

They turned, as did the others round about, to see who this could be. Andrew and John saw the bearded young man. He wore the dress of a country workman—a simple

[1] Literally the 'House of Fishing'. See map.

robe of homespun wool woven in one piece, bleached by the sun and rain. A strong young carpenter, his hands were hard with the use of saw and plane, hammer and adze. He was lithe and sinewy, with muscles taut and body in perfect trim from the labour of the workshop, followed by the fasting of the desert, sleep under the open sky, and long days of walking in the spring sunshine and the rain.

The fishermen, however, felt that there was something in him that made them want to be with him: a mastery, a radiance, a strong, commanding personality that fascinated them. Not only John the Baptist's words, but the power of Jesus himself, drew them to walk towards him. He was, in fact, walking away from them in the other direction. They followed.

As they came near, Jesus, hearing footsteps behind him, turned. He saw that they were coming to speak to him. So he stopped and said:

'What is it that you want?'

Too confused to be able to put their need into words, the young men stammered out:

'Teacher, where are you staying?'

'Come and see,' replied Jesus.

So they walked along together to the home in 'The House by the Ford,' where Jesus was staying. They talked together in his room and on the roof-top for the rest of the day. They knew they would never forget those hours. One of them, over half a century later, remembered the very hour when it all began. The other, Andrew, not only made up his mind then and there that here was, indeed, the leader for whom they had all waited, and that his life must be given to him, but hurried off first thing the next morning to his brother Simon.

'Simon,' he cried, his dark eyes blazing with excitement, 'We have found him, the Messiah, the Anointed One. Come along and see him.'

So Simon, a strong, fiery-hearted young Galilean fisher-

man, went with his brother Andrew. Jesus looked intently into the face of Simon, gazed deep into the character of the young man; read at once the impulsive, flaming heart and the sincerity and the simplicity of him, and said:

'You are Simon the son of John. Your name is to be Peter the "Rock"—"Cephas".'

That day Jesus made up his mind to go back to his home country of Galilee. The young men had decided to do as John the Baptist had said; and in this the Baptist showed his superb goodness and his greatness of heart—to transfer their discipleship from himself to Jesus. So John, Andrew, and Simon with Jesus started off north-eastward. They said farewell to John the Baptist, the shaggy, stormy-voiced prophet of the wilderness. They never saw him alive again.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAY OF THE SEA

THEY climbed out of the close, damp heat of the Jordan hollow up to the wider valley and took the road northward. Facing the snows of Mount Hermon, fifty miles away, they took the path to the left up a winding ravine. The air grew fresher as they climbed to sea-level. Then, with Little Hermon on their left and the village of Endor, where the witch gave Saul the vision of his doom, they turned the flank of Mount Tabor and climbed the hills of Jesus' Galilean homeland.

They walked along talking with the strong burr of the northern dialect. On the way Jesus got into touch with another man who lived in Andrew's village, Bethsaida. His name, like Andrew's, was Greek. It was Philip, which means 'lover of horses'. Jesus called Philip to follow him with the others. So the five young men—Jesus, Andrew, John, Simon, and Philip—went striding over the rolling hills. They were all out for adventure: to live or die together for the vision of the Kingdom to come. Jesus saw that Kingdom clearly. They could only see it in blurred yet thrilling outline. They were on their way to the busy northern shores of the lake, to the home-towns of these new followers of his. The craggy heights of the Horns of Hathin loomed on the right. They plunged down the narrowing gorge. Just at that moment a gleam of blue shone out far away down the ravine.

'The sea,' cried Simon, 'there is home.'

When they crossed the little stream that brawled among boulders in the ravine they turned to the right and followed the now swiftly flowing water. The road became steeper. Solemn storks waded in the stream; then, as the group came nearer, slowly spread their wide wings and sailed away with necks outstretched and legs trailing. Tawny, half-wild Bedouin dogs rushed out from an encampment, barking

'A gleam of blue shone out far away down the ravine.'

On the 'Way of the Sea', the Ravine of Robbers, with the north end of the Lake of Galilee in the distance.

PLATE XI

furiously, and then retreated, snarling, under the long, low black huts, where black-haired, wrinkled women sat sifting wheat grains and swinging goat-skins in which the cream was slowly being churned into butter.

They were now in the mouth of the ravine.[1] On the precipitous sides black goats scrambled, butted, and browsed. The goat-herd made plaintive music on his pipe, and then started scrambling down to the stream to lead the herd to the watering. Doves on the thorn trees by the wayside courted in the spring sunshine. It was the Way of the Sea which ran here through the Vale of Doves. The cliffs now towered high above them on both sides, red rocks carved in wild shapes. As Simon and Andrew looked up, they could see the darker blotches high up under the cliff-edge. These were the mouths of Robbers' Caves.

Simon and Andrew and John, as boys, often heard tales from the old fishermen on the lake of the wild doings up there in their own young days. The stories told how rebels had taken refuge in those caves when Herod the Great's grim soldiers hunted them over the Galilean hills. Herod, infuriated at their defiance of his rule, had made great cages which he filled with soldiers and let down with strong cables over the edge of the cliff on to the ledge. Bursting open the cage doors, the soldiers with lighted torches and straw smoked the rebels out of their caves like hornets from a nest. As the rebels tottered out of the caves through the suffocating smoke, racked with coughing, the soldiers hacked them down with swords. It was a story of fifty years ago to make Simon flush with passion as he thought of these slaughtered heroes of his nation.

The ravine now opened out on to a lovely little plain. Coming round a corner strewn with gigantic boulders, they saw, across this plain, all covered with the green of many trees and vines, the blue gleam of the waters of the lake.

They came out from the ravine of the Way of the Sea into

[1] Now the Wady Haman.

the Plain of Gennesaret, which runs from the ravine to the lake. The plain was one of the most fertile places in the world. Indeed, it was so wonderful in its richness of tree and vine, flower and fruit, that it was called 'The Garden of Princes'. Already, even in these spring days, it was warm enough to make the shade of the trees very grateful. For it lay over six hundred and fifty feet below sea-level, whereas the hills which Jesus had crossed that morning, rose a thousand feet above the Mediterranean.

On this sea-plain, Jesus and the others walked through groves of walnut trees, thousands of them, that spread their dark green leaves for shade. Under these leaves, on the grey twigs, the nuts were growing in their smooth green caskets. The thick, gnarled, and twisted trunks of ancient trees carried under grey-green leaves the oval olives.

As they came nearer still to the lake, Jesus saw the vine, with its tender shoots of little delicate, crinkled, moist brown and green leaves coming from the pruned, wizened stumps. He could take a fig from one of the grey trees which are able, in the astonishing climate of that plain, to bear fruit, crop after crop, for nine and even ten months in the year. So they pushed on along the road. At last, by the lake-side itself, he found date-palms. These trees, which reared their bare, brown trunks to the high crest, hid heavy clumps of golden-brown dates under the crown of leaves.

A man with a couple of big open-work baskets swung across a donkey, met them. The baskets were full of doves which fluttered in agitation as the donkey picked its way jerkily up the ravine. He was a man of Magdala, the little town whose outskirts they were now reaching. He had snared the doves on the cliffs of the ravine. He was off on the southward road for Jerusalem. For the people of Magdala sold pigeons wholesale to Jerusalem dealers. They, in turn, sold the doves in the Temple to the hundreds of thousands of poor pilgrims who sacrificed a dove or pigeon as they could not afford a lamb at the feast time.

Passing the outskirts of Magdala, and leaving that village on their right, Jesus, Simon, and the rest went northward by the road that followed the coast-line. This coast road curved by an entrancing, scalloped arch of little bays—seven of them within a mile. In one of them lay the fishing-village of Bethsaida. There John's father and brother were at work. An aqueduct ran behind their village to carry the hot, healing waters that gushed out of the earth across to the Roman baths. Houses climbed the low headland behind. On the other side of it a fine, busy city, Capernaum, was hidden. There Simon Peter now lived. Ahead rose the hills behind Bethsaida and Capernaum. Philip and John and Andrew and Simon quickened their steps, for they were close to their homes now. In the beautiful tiny bay of 'Fisherhome' (Bethsaida), a score and more of fishing-boats rocked gently on the water.

At last they were at home. John ran to the beach to greet his father Zebedee and his brother James; Philip went to his home. The others passed on over the low headland to Capernaum. As they came round a corner they stopped. Simon and Andrew led them through a doorway into a little courtyard. Simon's wife greeted him with rejoicing, for he had been away for weeks. His fingers were already itching to get at his fishing-gear: the throw-net with which he fished in the shallows, and the drag-net for deeper waters. Jesus now made his home in Capernaum, maybe in Simon's house. For the rest of his life this city was the centre to which his steps turned after each pilgrimage to Jerusalem and each journey among the villages and towns of Galilee.

CHAPTER XX

JERUSALEM

JESUS decided to go up from Capernaum to Jerusalem to be present at the Passover Feast.[1] He, with his companions, Simon and Andrew, James, John, and Philip, turned their backs on the fishing-boats and the lake, taking the old road across the little Plain of Gennesaret up the gorge of the Way of the Sea and over the hills of Galilee southward.

It was a strange adventure that they undertook.

Jesus was on his way to the city that was the centre of the life of his nation. He was to arrive at the Feast when Jewish folk from all over the world were gathered there. He went to tell the Good News of God's Kingdom—his Rule of Love. But to the learned rabbis and exalted priests Jesus would inevitably be a mere handicraftsman from a province despised for its uncouth ignorance. His friends, his followers, were a group of young fishermen. They talked in the guttural Galilean dialect that marked them—to the ears of Jerusalem—as rough, uncultured men, looked down on by people educated in the metropolis and its university, the Temple. What attention could Jesus expect to get from the scholarly, cultivated Scribe and the refined, religious Pharisee, let alone the aristocratic Sadducee? Indeed the Jerusalem leaders were in the habit of sneering at Galilee 'from which no prophet ever comes'.

Three days of hard walking brought them to the crest of the Mount of Olives. Countless pilgrims thronged the Mount, the Kidron valley, the city bazaars, the Temple Courts. They came from all over the world, for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a supreme happiness towards which every Jew looked with longing. Whether the Jew were a merchant boarding his ship in the harbour of New Carthage in Spain to make an inventory of his cargo, or a handicraftsman

[1] A.D. 28 probably.

haggling with sturdy, shaggy Gauls in the busy port of Massilia at the mouth of the Rhone, a student under the shadow of the Parthenon in the schools of Athens, or a philosopher in Alexandria on the hot coasts of Africa, a lawyer in Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates, or a silversmith in Ephesus, a silk-weaver in Damascus, or even a daring trader among the island Britons on the edge of the world—wherever he was, the one, the only centre to which the thoughts of a Jew swung as a magnetic needle turns to the Pole was this Holy Place on these Sacred Hills.

The songs that a Jewish boy learned, whether he lived in Rome or Lyons, in a lake-city among the Alps or on the banks of the Danube, among the rose-gardens of Persia or under the shadow of the Sphinx by the Nile, were musical with the glory of this Temple at which Jesus, Simon, Andrew, Philip, and John were now gazing.

These songs chanted the loveliness of the place, fit for the dwelling-place of the Eternal.

'Great is the Lord
And greatly to be praised.
In the city of our God,
In the mountain of his holiness.
Beautiful for situation,
The joy of the whole earth
Is Mount Zion.'

And

'Out of Zion,
The perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.'

They rose to a lyrical ecstasy of patriotism in the cry:

'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'

They centred their vision upon the Temple, the priceless

jewel in this lovely setting, singing, whether they lived north or south, east or west:

> 'I will worship toward thy holy temple,
> And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness
> And for thy truth.'

The rugged prophets had cried aloud in the streets and on the rocky hills that God is one God and is good—they, first of all the seers in the world, had upheld that truth in face of derision and death. And the poets, in exile on the banks of the Euphrates, had sung through their tears of the Temple on this hill as the centre for his worship.

What, then, was there in Jesus and in what he had to say about the Kingdom of God that would clash with all that? Nothing. But there was a fearful, a tragic life-and-death clash with the leaders who ruled the worship in that Temple.

Why?

The priests, and especially their great Council of Rulers—the Sanhedrin—said that only a Jew could worship Jehovah in that Temple. He was the God of their nation. He must be worshipped by special gifts, the slaughter and burning of sheep and oxen and doves. Millions of Jews came every year to Jerusalem to pay their worship. Heaps of gold and silver filled the chests in the Temple treasury—all brought by these pilgrims.

What Jesus taught would, however, in the long run, sweep that away. For if men came to believe what Jesus taught—that God is one universal Father of all nations; that he can be worshipped in all places; and asks, not for the sacrifice of the blood of animals, but for a pure heart and the sacrifice of self in loving obedience—then the money and the pride of authority that came through those sacrifices and the Temple worship would disappear. The High Priest might become as poor—and as rich—as Simon or Andrew—or even as Jesus himself. The priests and the forces of the Law were sure to attack Jesus once they realized his real aim.

Jesus and his companions plunged down the path into the Kidron valley and took the way up the Roman stepped street and through the busy bazaars into the city itself, that Jesus had taken as a twelve-year-old boy.[1]

So they, in company with the crowds of pilgrims from many lands, walked into the Royal Cloisters on the south side of the Court of the Gentiles with its towering Corinthian pillars. Looking through the forest of marble columns,[2] the disciples saw the crowds of pilgrims in the Court of the Gentiles, the immense space, nearly a thousand feet square, floored in many-coloured marble, on the north side of which the Sanctuary itself reared its mountainous snowy, gold-crested mass. They heard the chaffering of merchants and the haggling of the money-lenders as the pilgrims changed their coins for Temple half-shekels.[3]

Pilate had already ridden up to Jerusalem from his castle in the beautiful new city of Caesarea on the coast, as he did at least three times a year to keep order at the great feasts. In company with the High Priest, Pilate went into the Treasury Room of the Tower of Antony, where they broke the seals of the chest in which the High Priest's sacred robes were guarded by the captain of the garrison.

Meanwhile, Jesus and his friends mingled with the immense crowd of men that wound in and out among the pillars of the courts. The pilgrims were dressed in all the colours of their tribes and nations. As they moved to and fro, they wove, as on a living loom, a tapestry of mankind—the creamy wool robes and tawny camel-hair tunics of the desert tribes, the merchant-princes in turbans of mauve and green, yellow and black, from Babylon and Teheran and India; noble women, with silken scarves in exquisite shades curved and knotted round their heads, with only the cheeks

[1] For description see Chapter X.

[2] There were one hundred and sixty.

[3] St. John's Gospel describes Jesus' cleansing of the Temple on this visit. The other three writers place it in the last week of his life, where this book will describe it.

and dark eyes, made larger with touches of kohl, visible; and the village women with their clean, whitehooded cloaks thrown over the red silk embroideries and their festival dresses.

A cry of 'The King! the King!'

Heads and shoulders bowed in obeisance as Herod the Tetrarch from Galilee passed through in state, borne to the Temple on a royal litter on the shoulders of slaves.

In the Temple, in the Holy Place, Caiaphas moved to the High Altar, dressed in his blue tunic with the tiny bells around the hem that tinkled as he walked; on his breast the jewels of the Ephod, with the twelve precious stones symbolizing the tribes of Israel, and on his head the blue tiara with its golden flames. The crowds of pilgrims came toward the Holy Place. The head of each household carried his flawless lamb across the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women and up the steps to the Holy Place. Group by group they were led into the Court of the Priests. The massive gates clanged behind them. Three trumpets blew. It was the time of sacrifice.[1] Group after group of worshipping pilgrims came into the place of sacrifice till all was finished. The priests brought water and washed the blood from the marble floor of the Court. Censers of burning incense were brought and swung in the air. As the sun went down the sacred lamps before the altar were trimmed for the night. Silence fell.

The stars that night above Jerusalem looked down on three men, Pontius Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas, who little dreamt that they were to be drawn into an immortal conflict that was to begin in the simple teaching of a fourth—a carpenter from Galilee—and was to grow to a tragedy and triumph that would hold the eyes of mankind for ever.

[1] For description see Chapter X.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TALK ON THE ROOF-TOP

THE next morning Jesus went up again into the Temple. Sitting down under the shadow of the cedar-roofed court with his followers, a group swiftly gathered round him as he began to tell the people about the Kingdom of God. There was some excitement as word passed from mouth to mouth of this new teaching and of the power and the authority with which he spoke. The talk spread till it reached the ears of the rulers themselves—the groups of Sadducees and Pharisees, the learned Scribes and Priests.

Among these was Annas the white-bearded ex-high-priest with cold, haughty eyes. He was a secret, scheming statesman. So clever was he that—although the high-priest was appointed by the Roman governor—Annas contrived that no less than six of his family became high-priests; indeed, it is probable that the purse of each Roman governor had been filled with gold by Annas to secure the appointment of his sons as high-priests. Now his son-in-law, Caiaphas, was in that position.

Annas, Caiaphas, and a number of others were very proud. They despised, not only the common people, but the lower orders of the priests who served under them. They belonged to a small and powerful party in Jerusalem called the Sadducees, made up exclusively from a few high-priestly, aristocratic families. It was always a Sadducee who, as high-priest, was chairman of the Sanhedrin, the ruling court of seventy-one men whose place of meeting was in the Hall of Hewn Stone in the Temple. The Sadducees did not really care about the religion of the people. They said that man has no immortal soul, and that there is no resurrection. Man does not live for ever. Nor is there any judgement of man. No angels or spirits exist. Man is master of his own fate and free to act as he wills.

Sitting there in their palaces and rich villas, surrounded

by numerous servants and every possible comfort, or in the Sanhedrin, judging the people, the Sadducees were naturally against all change and resisted any new thought. Above all, they would fight to the death any idea that cut at the root of the Temple Sacrifices through priests, for that was the very foundation of their immense wealth and their power.[1]

What worried the Sadducees, however, on the Sanhedrin, was that they were always in a minority. The leaders who had a majority in the Sanhedrin were their enemies, the Pharisees. The Pharisees were enthusiastic religious people. Their religious faith was quite contrary to that of the Sadducees. They believed that man has an immortal soul; that he will rise again; that he will have life in the world to come; that God will judge him there, and that spirits go to and fro doing God's errands. They believed that the day would come when God would rule everywhere, his Kingdom would come when men not only obeyed all the Law that had come from Moses, but the Traditions of the Elders as well. These Traditions were made up of thousands upon thousands of rules for behaviour that the Rabbis had put together to guide men when the Law did not seem to be clear enough.

Sadducees and Pharisees alike were bewildered and rather annoyed by Jesus and what he said. It was, indeed, perplexing to have a young Rabbi—a man who was, from his hands, his tunic, and sandals, obviously of the poorer classes—making such an impression on the people. A carpenter, indeed—so, at any rate, the folk from Nazareth said. From the rough, turbulent, highland, north country, too, whence a prophet never came. He had never studied in the University of the Rabbis. His followers were a group of tanned young fishermen with the smell of the fish on their linen, and with

[1] The wealth of the Temple is suggested by the fact that when the Roman, Crassus, seized the Treasury some fifty years before Jesus' birth, his booty was worth £2,000,000. The fact that the Sadducees only existed because of the Temple is shown by their complete disappearance when the Temple was destroyed. The Sadducees were, as we shall see, directly responsible for the death of Jesus.

hard hands trained to pull a tarry sail-rope or throw a fishing-net, grip an oar, or handle a tiller, rather than to write with a stylus on the wax tablets of the scholar.

One man among the Pharisees, however—rich, orthodox, learned, a member of the Sanhedrin itself, and a leader among the Jewish people—could not stifle the feeling, as he listened and as he watched Jesus, that in him God was really speaking and at work. This man's name was Nicodemus. In spite of his own learning, wealth, position, and piety, he felt that he lacked the greatest thing, the final secret of life. The others lacked it, too, but did not know; he felt the want, the thirst. As Nicodemus listened and watched, he became quite sure that Jesus had that secret. To say this to his fellow Pharisees would have brought down on himself derisive laughter and a hail-storm of reviling, as he, in fact, was to discover later. This ridicule Nicodemus dared not face. Yet he could not rest, he must learn more from Jesus, whose voice, words, and acts stirred his deepest spirit as nothing had ever before done.

He decided to go and see Jesus. Nicodemus' character was a strange blend of courage and caution, as he showed now and twice later on in his life. Courage was needed for a member of the Sanhedrin to visit a young artisan-prophet from the country as a seeker going to get wisdom. That courage Nicodemus had. But his caution led him to make the visit secretly by night. He inquired where Jesus was lodging. Young John, it seems, had relatives in Jerusalem and, at the same time, was in touch with some of the Temple leaders. It would be natural that Jesus should stay in that house on his pilgrimage to the Feast. John could thus tell Nicodemus where he could talk with Jesus secretly and afterwards tell the story of it that has come down through the centuries.

After nightfall, then, when the pilgrim crowds had gone to their lodging, Nicodemus, covered from head to foot in his cloak, to avoid being recognized as well as to protect himself against the sharp night breeze, threaded the

narrow, dark, stone-paved streets of Jerusalem. Climbing silently the stone stairs outside the house, he reached the roof where Jesus sat. There they talked.

The Passover moon and the stars shone on the white walls, the colonnades, and the golden roof of the Temple. The grey-green olive orchards of the Mount and the distant, tawny hills of Judaea lay silent and lovely, bathed in white radiance. The cool night breeze that springs up at that time of year with wonderful regularity, bearing dews from the Mediterranean, swept over the city.

'Rabbi,' Nicodemus began, and the word used by an old member of the Sanhedrin to a young, wandering Teacher, showed how Jesus' power had gripped him, 'we know that you are a teacher come from God.'

He stopped, his perplexity written clearly in his silence. Obviously Nicodemus wanted to know from Jesus how to come into living knowledge of God—how to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus answered Nicodemus' dumb need in words that came straight from the great experience in the Jordan waters, when the Spirit of God came down on him from above and the Voice said—'Thou art my Son.'

'In very truth,' Jesus replied, 'I tell you unless a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

Nicodemus was bewildered—so perplexed that he stammered out a question that sounds simply stupid.

'How is it possible for a grown man to be born again?' he asked.

Nicodemus was not so wooden as to think that Jesus really meant a grown man must become physically a baby. Why, then, did it seem so wild a paradox to Nicodemus to be born of the Spirit? The reason was that, for him, to be in the Kingdom of God you must be a Jew. The Kingdom of God was a national kingdom. It was a kingdom of Jews, with God's anointed Messiah ruling in Jerusalem. Only Jews, then, could be citizens of that Kingdom.

Nicodemus was simply saying what everybody believed.

A full-grown Gentile or pagan could not be born again a Jew. When Jesus said that to enter the Kingdom a man must be born from above—that is in his spirit, his soul, he was saying something quite revolutionary. He was telling a Jew, belonging to the people chosen by God, that nationality or race—which to that Jew was everything—was, in fact, of no importance at all to salvation. The Kingdom of God is not, as Nicodemus and all the Jewish people of his day everywhere believed, a Kingdom of the Jews, but a Kingdom of the spirit.

But what Jesus said went deeper still. He taught that the natural man is under the rule of his body, but that to reach that real life in which the soul controls the body, he must become a child of God who is spirit.

'What is born of the flesh is flesh,' he went on, 'what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.'

'Do not, then,' Jesus concluded, 'be startled at my saying to you, "you must be born from above". The wind blows where it chooses. You hear its sound;' and in the silence Nicodemus could hear the soughing in the trees of the night-breeze from the distant sea; 'but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with every one who is born of the Spirit.'

'How is all this possible?' replied the perplexed Nicodemus.

'You, "a teacher in Israel", and you do not grasp this?' Jesus said, astonished. Then, to show that he was not talking abstract theory—'Truly we speak of what we know by experience; and we bear witness of what we have ourselves seen.'

He went on to say that he himself was born from above, had come from God's presence, and that in him men could find the spirit-way to new birth in the Kingdom.

Nicodemus left Jesus after this talk. Nor do we hear of any further talk of Nicodemus with Jesus in his lifetime. Yet we shall twice see Nicodemus suddenly and unexpectedly —but each time with caution, putting a strong brake on his good impulse—show that he had secretly, at that interview, come to believe in Jesus.

CHAPTER XXII

THE EAGLE CAGED

JESUS, after this Feast and when the million pilgrims were streaming away over the hills in every direction to their homes, left Jerusalem with his men and went up into the hills among the villages of Judaea. There he told the people the Good News. Many listened and, hearing, accepted his teaching as the Truth. John the Baptist was teaching, too, at a place called Aenone. The people were so deeply moved that it greatly troubled Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch of Galilee.

Herod had left Jerusalem at the end of the Feast. With his rich cavalcade, he went magnificently down the road to Jerusalem. He crossed the Jordan valley to climb to his grim and splendid castle of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea.[1] There he walked the battlements brooding. For he was tormented.

What fears could trouble Herod Antipas? The Emperor Augustus, nearly thirty years ago, had made him ruler—Tetrarch—over Galilee and over Peraea, the land beyond Jordan. He could surely afford to laugh at any army that should try to wrest his castle or his power from him. For Machaerus Castle was poised on a lonely pinnacle of rock. More than three thousand five hundred feet beneath him, Herod could catch the steely gleam of the Dead Sea through the hot, vapour-charged air. Above that valley rose sheer the precipices of black volcanic rock. One of these, split on three sides by awful chasms, climbed to a rugged, almost inaccessible peak. On this naked, torn volcanic mountain of brown, black, and red lava ironstone Herod the Great had reared Machaerus Castle. Its vast cellars were stocked with grain and jars of oil and wine. The armoury was crammed with swords, javelins, and shields for thousands of men.

[1] Its massive ruins are even to-day called 'Makaur' by the Arabs.

Heaps of unwrought iron, bronze, and lead lay in its smithy ready for the armourer's forge and anvil. Deep cisterns, hewn in the solid rock, held hundreds of thousands of gallons of water refreshed continuously by a stream that ran on an aqueduct from fresh springs in the mountain-side.

Herod Antipas in Machaerus Castle could defy the longest siege and the mightiest army. Yet he was the prey of fears. Why? He was responsible to Rome for the peace, contentment and order of the land. All around him was unrest. And it was Herod's own fault. Every day breathless messengers came from the fringes of the eastern desert bringing fresh news of the massing of the Arabs against him. Down the Jordan valley disquieting stories came of the thousands of excited Jews swarming around this strong, wild, desert prophet John, as he proclaimed to all the new Kingdom.

The Arab menace was due to Herod Antipas' own crimes. He had married, years before, the daughter of a great Arab sheikh, King Aretas. Later on, while staying in Rome, Antipas fell in love with Herodias, the wife of one of his brothers, and she with him. So Antipas took Herodias from his brother and sent his own Arab bride back to her father Aretas. The proud Arab was furious at this insult to his daughter. So Aretas was now working with might and main to draw together the forces of the Arab tribes that were under his influence to fight Herod Antipas.

Tiberius Caesar, guarding his grim silence at Rome, scanning with his soldier eyes all the horizons of his empire, had his spies watching his vassal-ruler, Herod, whose vicious passion had infuriated the Arabs. His weaknesses had created unrest on a Roman frontier. Would not Caesar's long arm and heavy hand be stretched out to punish Herod? That was why dread gnawed at Herod's heart.

Could not Herod crush Aretas? He might as well try to crush a cloud. If Antipas sent out a cohort to fight Aretas, the forces of the Arab chief on their swift horses and racing camels melted into the desert like a mist, and then re-formed

in a more menacing cloud than ever. Herod could, however, do one thing. He could stop this seditious preacher, John, who was raising the Jews to ecstatic visions of a new Kingdom, half religious, half political, and so doubly dangerous. John, too, was fearless in denouncing vice even in the highest places. He denounced Herod's crime in taking his brother's wife Herodias.

Herod could stop John. Very well, he would. So he sent a group of his soldiers down the ravine from Machaerus Castle to the place where John was preaching to arrest him. The shameful deed was done. The heroic voice was never heard again on the banks of the Jordan or by the waters of Aenone. The fearless prophet was dragged southwards, his hands shackled. He reached the Dead Sea and climbed up the steep ravines. There, at last, the great gate of Machaerus Castle clanged behind him. John was a prisoner.

The voice of John was silenced. The torch of revolution was—Herod hoped—quenched. Herod could feel that at least one of his fears was destroyed. But, as John marched south and the news of his arrest ran like wildfire through the land, it reached the ears of Jesus. He did not hesitate. He was in Judaea, out of Herod's dominion; but he turned his face northward to make straight for Galilee in the very territory of Herod Antipas himself. On hearing of the imprisonment of John, Jesus, in defiance of the danger that he ran, took up the work that John could now no longer do. He took the northward road to proclaim in Galilee itself the Good News that the Kingdom of God was close at hand.

Herod had stamped on the fire to quench it. He was to discover that the embers were to be scattered across the world, there to kindle undying flame.

'He must needs pass through Samaria.'

Ploughing on the site of Herod's city, Sebaste, the capital of Samaria; while shepherds (and a sheep) lunch under the trees. (The columns are of Herod's Hall of Justice.)

CHAPTER XXIII

WATER

TURNING his face northward with his disciples, Jesus climbed the road over the rough limestone hills of Judaea. Mile after hard mile they trudged along the rocky, broken road. The sun rose over their right shoulders and began to sink. As they came out into the high, open, fruitful little Plain of Mukhneh—'the Cornfields'—the field-hands were thinking of leaving the plough to go home for rest.

They saw ahead the stone mouth of an ancient well. The great sheikh, Jacob, moving among these hills with his camels and thousands of sheep and goats, seventeen hundred years before, had dug it. He paid a hundred pieces of money for this bit of land. There he spread his tent, not far from Shechem city. He dug a deep well where he could water his flocks and herds without asking the surly city-fathers of Shechem, who controlled all the surface springs and water-courses. He gave the land to Joseph, and the building that protected Joseph's tomb stood near by, as though the Patriarch's spirit stayed by the ancient well, protecting it.[1]

So Jesus sat down under a clump of trees to rest. His disciples walked on another seven hundred yards to the town of Sychar. They were going to buy some olives, dates, and bread to eat together with the Master in the open air, drinking the delicious cool water from the dark depths of the well. But how were they to get water from the well, whose surface lay more than eighty feet below? No one was likely to come all that way from Sychar with jar and rope.

Jesus, looking up, saw above him the rocky foreheads of two bare, abrupt mountains. On Jesus' left was Mount Gerizim, or the Mount of Blessing. The even higher one

[1] Joshua xxiv. 32.

on his right was Mount Ebal, or the Mount of Cursing. They guarded this southern entrance to the beautiful hilly land of Samaria. The Roman road at their feet was the only pass through the mountain range from the East to the Great Sea and the Western world. It crossed, close to where Jesus sat, the main road from south to north on which Jesus, two days later, tramped up to Galilee.

The valley between the mountains echoed with the stories of the heroes of Jesus' race. Jesus knew that Abraham came from the east across the Jordan into Canaan by this pass. On the slopes of these two mountains the tribes of Israel came together with Prince Joshua. On the one mountain slope they had shouted the curses that would come upon them if they disobeyed, and on the other the blessings if they obeyed the Law given to Moses.

Jesus sat looking over this scene while his disciples drew near to Shechem. As they went along the winding way they met a woman. Her water-pot balanced on her head, she came down the path, moving with easy rhythm against the green of the orchards of apple and quince, the cream of the corn-fields and the blue of the sky.

It was late afternoon.[1] The valley was ripe under the summer heat. The grasshoppers alone chirped sharply in the silence. The woman came towards the well, expecting to find the usual solitude under the trees that shaded its mouth. Astonished, she saw, in the shadow dappled with flecks of sunlight, a stranger there. His sandals were dusty with travel, and his whole body showed fatigue. As he lifted his face towards her, she felt the call of its youthful weariness. Something happened now that had never come to her before. Two clear eyes, that hid nothing, looked with frank, smiling brotherliness into hers; and two lips parted and said: 'Peace

[1] John says 'the sixth hour'. If his reckoning was the ordinary Jewish reckoning from sunrise this would make it about noon, as many people hold it to have been. There are, however, numerous reasons for believing that John reckoned by the Roman method, like the modern world, i.e. from midday to midnight. In that case it was late afternoon—about six p.m.

be with thee'—adding, with a gesture toward her water-pot and the long cord around her waist, and with a friendly ring in his voice, 'Give me to drink.'

She was startled. She unwound her cord and let the jar carefully down the dark, cool depths of the well. As she did so, she asked him:

'How is that you—a Jew—ask me—a Samaritan woman—for water?'

No wonder she was astounded. The Jews loathed the Samaritans. The Samaritans returned burning scorn for scorn. The pure-blooded Jews declared—and truly—that in the old days when they were in exile in Babylon the Samaritans had married Assyrians—so mixing Semitic with Turanian blood, and had worshipped barbaric gods. The Jews, therefore, refused to let the Samaritans help when they offered to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.[1]

'You shall not pollute with your defiling hands our Holy Place,' they cried.

Furious at this insult, the Samaritans never forgave the Jews. Every trick that malicious cleverness could invent to hinder the Jews from building the Temple they carried out. The Jews, in revenge, never forgave the Samaritans. 'Even a crumb of Samaritan bread is fouler than the flesh of swine,' they said. It was an international blood feud. Then the Samaritans set up a proud rival Temple of their own on Mount Gerizim.[2] The climax came, however, just about the year when Jesus went up to the Temple as a boy. A group of Samaritans did a horrible deed. They hurried to Jerusalem

[1] Ezra iv. 2–4. 636 B.C.

[2] The Samaritans and Jews even used to fight each other when they met in other lands. For example, we have records of how, say, in Egypt, at Alexandria, a Jew and a Samaritan started arguing whether Jerusalem or Gerizim was the more sacred spot, and quickly fell to blows. So furious did the enmity become in Palestine that, some years after the death of Jesus, Samaritans attacked and killed a group of Galilean pilgrims at the town of Jenin (the northern entrance into Samaria from the Plain of Esdraelon and Galilee). As a consequence, civil war broke out and only stopped when the Emperor Claudius intervened from Rome, in A.D. 51.

secretly one night bearing hideous burdens. Waiting until the Temple gates were open at dawn—they crept in and scattered dead bodies about the sacred courts. This, the vilest conceivable pollution, shrieked aloud for revenge. So, although the Samaritans obeyed the laws of Moses, kept the feasts, and looked back to Jacob as their father, yet the Jews and they hated each other far more fiercely than either of them hated the Romans.

The surprise of the Samaritan woman at hearing, for the first time in her life, a friendly Jewish voice, disturbed even her poise. But, added to the racial hate of Samaritan and Jew, was the still deeper abyss of separation that came from the fact that she was a woman. A Jew would not speak in the streets even to a woman whom he knew. To talk in the road with one whom he had never met was a scandal. Jesus, without a second's hesitation, leapt both abysses and braved both scandals. Indeed, for him, these divisions did not exist. Neither the race-quarrel nor the difference of sex counted with him in face of the fact that Jew and Samaritan, boy and girl, man and woman, were the children of one Father.

The woman was still more amazed when Jesus' voice took a ring of more than royal power as he answered her question.

'If you had known,' he said, quietly, 'who it is that said to you "Give me some water", you would have asked him and he would have given you "living water".'

In her bewilderment, respect and challenge fought one another. With a gesture she pointed down toward the hidden waters.

'You have no jar to draw with and the well is deep,'[1] she challenged him, 'so whence do you get this "living water"? Are you,' she exclaimed incredulously, 'greater than our fore-

[1] It is now seventy-nine feet deep, cut in the limestone rock, and nine feet wide, though very narrow at the opening. It was probably deeper still in Jesus' day, as there is rubble at the bottom.

father Jacob, who gave us the well and himself drank from it, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?'

Jesus, rising above her natural questions, broke into thrilling and immortal words:

'Every one,' he answered, pointing to the well, 'who drinks of this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never, never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become a spring of water within him, welling up for eternal life.'

'Sir,' the woman replied (and who can tell how far oriental scorn was concealed under the words, or whether they gleamed with the first flickering light of belief in what Jesus was saying?) 'give me that water, that I may never be thirsty, nor come continually all this way to draw from the well.'

No wonder she said—'all this way,' for it was nearly half a mile from her home to the well, a long way to carry a jar of water several times a day. Why did she not get the water at the spring that breaks out in Sychar itself so vigorously that its force can turn a mill? Certainly the water here was cool and pure and health-giving in a way that the hard, limestone spring at the foot of Mount Ebal was not, and the fact that it was Jacob's well evidently appealed to something in her.

Jesus, however, pierced to the root-reason why the woman took this long journey for the water. The town springs in Palestine are always the great meeting-places for the women, where they talk together; but this woman was living a life that the women of Sychar condemned as evil. They, therefore, made things so uncomfortable for her that she was glad to go alone to another well.

'Go,' said Jesus, 'and call your husband and come back.'

'I have no husband,' she replied, in her shame masking the truth.

'You say rightly,' Jesus replied, 'that you have no husband; for you have had five, and the man you have at present is not your husband. You have spoken the truth in saying that.'

'Sir,' replied the woman, startled out of her usual self-confidence, 'I see that you are a prophet.' Then, evading Jesus' challenge and deftly changing the subject, she went on: 'Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say that the place where people must worship is at Jerusalem.'

So she opened up audaciously the burning volcano from which the fire of hate blazed between the Jews and Samaritans. Jesus soared above that miserable conflict to a sublime truth that stands among the greatest ever spoken.

'Believe me, O woman,' said Jesus, 'the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain,' pointing up to where the altar crowned the crest of Mount Gerizim, 'nor at Jerusalem,' pointing back down the road up which he had walked. . . . 'A time is coming,' he went on, 'nay, it has already come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for indeed the Father desires such worshippers. God is spirit; and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'

'I know,' the woman answered, 'that "Christ"—"the Anointed" as he is called—the Messiah—is coming: when he has come he will tell us everything.'

Then Jesus made her, a Samaritan and a woman, the first of all human beings to hear from his lips the supreme statement which he long hid from the folk in Jerusalem, 'I am he —I who am now talking to you.'

The woman was awed into wondering silence. The disciples, who had now finished their buying in the market, came down the road from Sychar. As they drew near they were shocked and astounded to see that their Master was talking to a woman—and a Samaritan at that. Not one of them, however, ventured to put his astonishment into words, and say, 'What is it? Why are you talking with her?'

The woman, in her haste leaving her jar there at the well-

side, hurried away up the road to call the folk in Sychar to come down and see Jesus. All her fear of their attitude to her was forgotten.

'Come,' she cried, in excited exaggeration, 'and see a man who has told me everything that I have ever done. Can this, do you think, be the Christ?'

While the woman was away on the road to Sychar to bring back some of the people to see Jesus, the disciples laid out the provisions that they had brought and urged him to take some food.

'Rabbi,' they said, 'do eat something.'

'I have food to eat,' he answered, 'that you do not know about.'

'Is it possible,' they whispered to one another, 'that some one has brought him something to eat?'

'My food,' said Jesus, his mind still eagerly coursing ahead to Galilee and burning with the flame of his desire to see all men at one with the Father who made them, 'my food is to be obedient to him who sent me and thoroughly to carry out his work. You say, do you not, "It wants four months till harvest-time?" But look round, I tell you, and observe this plain—already ripe for the sickle—shining unto harvest.'

The Samaritan men from Sychar were by this time in sight on the road, and Jesus' gesture, sweeping across the cornfields, pointed finally to them as the living harvest.

'That proverb,' he went on, ' "One sows and another reaps" holds true here. I send you to reap a harvest for which you did not work; other men have worked and you reap the benefit of their labour.'

When the Samaritans, hurrying down the road, all agog with excitement at the woman's description of this Jewish teacher whom she believed to be the Messiah, arrived at the well, they crowded round Jesus and begged him to stay at Sychar. He agreed, and they all went up the road together. For two days Jesus stayed there telling the people his message of the Love of God. They were eager to learn, and a large

number of them, when the time came for him to go, were convinced that he was indeed the Christ.

As they put it to the woman—'We no longer believe just because you said it: we have heard for ourselves and we know that he really is the Saviour.'

At last they said 'Farewell', and with many salutations from the Samaritans, Jesus, with his men, again took the northward road towards home.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SON OF THE KING'S OFFICER

THEIR faces were now turned homeward. The arid hills of Judaea were behind. Here, in the valleys of Samaria, Jesus enjoyed the sound of running water. Streams running down from springs in the hills were carried, sometimes along rock-hewn aqueducts, sometimes in earthen water-channels, to feed the plants, to make the cucumbers and vines, the peaches and almonds grow. By the end of that day they had walked through Samaria from the southern gate between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to the Plain of Dothan on the northern border, where the boy Joseph was sold to merchants on the way to Egypt.

As dawn broke the next day they started across the Plain of Esdraelon, making for the hills of Galilee. As they came over a ridge that afternoon and dropped into the pleasant valley where the village of Cana lay they were glad to rest. While he had lingered in Judaea and talking with the Samaritans in Sychar, the pilgrims who had watched and listened to him in Jerusalem at the Feast had gone straight home. There in Cana and Capernaum and the other towns they told their families the things that the new Teacher from their own Galilee had done and said in Jerusalem. The rumour now ran that this new young Teacher, Jesus, was back in Galilee.

One of King Herod's principal officers of state was in dreadful agony of mind. He was probably an assistant to Chuza, the King's Steward.[1] His son was lying ill: tossing with fever. No doctors could heal him. His strength was ebbing. The boy was dying. The father leapt on his horse. He spurred the sweating beast up the steep way of the

[1] Seeing that Herod's Steward Chuza and his wife became followers of Jesus, his wife even travelling with Mary and some of the others to Jerusalem with Jesus.

Sea and across the hills to Cana—fifteen miles hard going under the midday sun. At seven o'clock that evening he found Jesus. Hurrying towards him, the father, frenzied with anxiety, begged Jesus to go at once down to Capernaum and heal his son. Jesus, to test the man, replied, 'You people, unless you see signs and wonders, will not believe.'

The father blurted out his abrupt demand. Signs and wonders were nothing to him. The boy, who was more to him than his own life, was lying there dying. That filled his whole landscape.

'Sir,' he cried, 'come down before my boy dies.'

The cry of the tormented father went straight to Jesus' heart.

'Go home,' he said to the man, 'your son lives.'

It was already sunset. The man could not get home down the ravine that night. Early the next morning the King's officer mounted his horse again and was off at a gallop back down the road towards Capernaum. He had got a little more than half-way when he saw some of his servants hurrying up the road. He did not need to ask them the news of his son. Their faces, wreathed in smiles, told him.

'The boy is healed,' they cried.

'When?' he asked. 'At what hour did he get better?'

'At seven o'clock yesterday,' they answered. It was the very hour when Jesus had said to him—'Your son lives.'

So the father hurried home to his son; and he and his wife and all the household believed in Jesus and became his followers.

Jesus and his friends followed soon afterwards down the same road. Jesus, at this time, came to a decision. To heal such folk was an act of goodness. If Jesus gave all his time and all his strength as a wandering Physician, he would leave behind him a lovely recollection; he would be remembered as a marvellous healer. But nothing that he did would change the lives of men through the ages. If, again, he went about the land from city to village telling his Good

News to the thousands of people, their minds would soon forget what he had said. Something more was needed. He must leave in the minds and hearts of a few chosen men such a deep knowledge of his Good News, and most of all such an experience of comradeship with himself, that when he was no longer alive on earth with them they could tell the world about him with authority and could lead folk to follow him.

How could this be done? These friends of his had come down to the Feast with him. Now they were going back to their work as fishermen. Supposing that he called them to be his constant companions. He could share with them day by day all that he had to tell them. Living with him, they would learn just what his message was, and come to know him too and be able to tell others. So he decided, and so he did, and to that we and the folk of all the centuries past and to come owe everything that is known about him.

CHAPTER XXV

YOUTH AND THE HERO

THE sparkling blue water lapped around the brown knees of Simon, as he stood on the shelving shingle whirling a fishing-net above his head. The water was warm. Seven springs, so hot that the Bethsaida boys could not bear to put their hands in the water, gushed out of the earth close by and ran into this little bay in the north-western corner of the Lake of Galilee, close by the Plain of Gennesaret.[1] The fish love the warmth and a quality in the hot spring water. The blue ripples were often shot with silver as they flashed to and fro in the shallows. Some of the water was carried along in an aqueduct, cut in the living rock around the contour of the hill-side, to Roman baths half a mile distant on the Plain of Gennesaret.

So Simon took his circular drag-net[2] in his right hand. The net was shaped like a parachute. When he held it hanging in his hand the parachute was closed. Round the edge small lead weights hung. Simon, whirling the net round his head, threw it, with a circling movement, up and out over the water. The centrifugal whirl of the lead weights opened the net. It fell outspread into the water. The weights carried the edges of the net to the bottom of the lake. There, like a small round tent, it covered the fish that were within its circuit. Then Simon dragged at the

[1] The spring still runs. The place is to-day called ''Ain el Tabighah'; 'Ain means 'well': the rest is an Arab corruption of the last seven letters of the Greek ἑπτὰ πηγαί 'Seven Springs'. The Roman aqueduct can be plainly traced and the foundations of Roman towers with steps cut in the rock right down to the shore in the centre of the bay.

[2] It is expressly said in the original Greek (Matthew iv. 18, and Mark i. 16) that Simon and Andrew were both fishing with a throw-net—ἀμφίβληστρον, which can only be used as described here, for fishing in shallow water near the shore. The writer has watched this same kind of net used by a fisherman wading in the water in the same way and at the very same spot where the warm waters still run and the fish still come in shoals to swim in them. See photograph (Pl. XIV).

'Simon threw his net up and out over the water.'
Fisherman with throw-net (such as Peter used) in the bay where Jesus said to him 'Follow me'.

PLATE XIV

cord attached to the centre of the net. As the middle of the net lifted, the lead weights drew the edges together on the lake-bottom. So the net was no longer a spread parachute, but a sack, of which the bottom was held together by the weight of the leads. In it a batch of gleaming, leaping silver fish were pulled to the shore. Close by, Andrew, Simon's brother, cast his net, too, out into the sea.

As its weighted edge sank, the two brothers heard the sound of sandals crunching on the beach. Turning, they saw Jesus walking towards them from the direction of Capernaum. Their eyes lighted up with joy as they saw him.

He hailed them. He had not come simply to pass the time of day with his friends. There was work afoot: a great adventure to face. Herod had thrown John the Baptist into his dungeon. Jesus saw that the way to overmaster Herod was to call to himself as a group the young men who had already at Bethabara by the Jordan at the baptism linked themselves first to John the Baptist and then with Jesus himself. He was going to call them to give up everything else and come with him, so that he could inspire, teach, and train them.

To do this, he must take his little group of friends to walk with him day by day in the open air; to talk together as they broke their fast on the hill-side; to debate as they went along the sheep-tracks to heal and teach the people.

'Come,' cried Jesus to Simon and Andrew, who stood there net in hand, 'Come, and follow me. I will make you fishers of men.'

Their young hero-worship flamed up in response. To be with him was their greatest joy. They understood little, so far, of what he wished them to do or say or be. He himself was the power that drew them. Without more ado, Andrew and Simon waded ashore, hung up their nets to dry, and started along the beach with Jesus. A little farther along were his other two friends, James and John. The two young sons were sitting in their father's boat as it rocked quietly on the water. Their father, Zebedee, was with them. Their heads

were bent over their nets, which they were repairing with fine, strong thread and a special netting needle. They were closing up the rents made by the night's fishing. Looking up, their faces, too, came alive with a thrill of hero-worship as they saw their friend and leader come striding along the lake-shore.

'Come,' he called to them, 'and follow me. I will make you fishers of men.' Zebedee and his wife were warm-blooded Galilean Jews, who were a-tingle with enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God and already knew something of what Jesus meant to their boys.[1] So young James and John leapt over the gunwale of the boat and splashed ashore to join Jesus and Andrew and Simon.

What called the four young men, two of them little more than older boys, to leap at the chance of being with Jesus all the time and of facing life and even death in his company? Not just what he had to say, for they knew little enough of his teaching yet; but the Man—his strong, fearless mastery, his simple, courteous lovingkindness; his radiant power, irresistible as sunshine.

To be with him was in itself to them the greatest adventure. And every day they were to learn something new from the Master.

Just as Zebedee had taught his sons, James and John, the trick of the tiller and the sail, the fall and the pull of the net, the ways of the fish and the play of the water and the wind on the boat; so Jesus began that day to open the lives of these young men to the breath of the Spirit, as their sails were spread to the breezes of the lake, and to teach them to be Fishers of Men.

[1] The mother herself later travelled with her sons and the other disciples in Jesus' company to Jerusalem.

'He went up the broad stone steps that led on to a raised pavement.'

The steps to the front portico and part of the west wall of the Synagogue at Capernaum built by the Roman centurion.

CHAPTER XXVI

MASTERY

FROM Simon Peter's house near the beach, Jesus, on the following Sabbath, had not far to walk through the streets of Capernaum to the synagogue.

He went in company with his friends up the broad stone steps that led between two haughty marble lions on to a raised pavement. This ran under a portico along the whole front of the synagogue.

It was one of the most splendid synagogues in the land. Nearly new, built of stone freshly hewn from the quarries of Wady Hamam, this House of Worship shone in the sunshine like marble. The noble roof, covered with Roman tiles, was carried upon walls far more richly ornamented than was usual in synagogues. The central door under this portico faced almost due south, towards the lake. It was crowned (as was the smaller door on each side of it) by lavishly carved lintels.

A wealthy Roman military officer in Capernaum, a friend of the Jewish people, had built this splendid synagogue for them. He was in command of a 'century' of soldiers there. It was an astonishing building. Although built for Jewish worship, Roman architects designed it. It was eighty feet long by sixty wide. All its measurements were governed, not by a Jewish rule, but by the unit of the Roman foot-length; and its proportions (the width three-quarters of the length) are the universal Roman rule for basilicas.

Jesus went into the building. Great pillars carved with rich Corinthian capitals of acanthus leaf made two aisles on each side of the central nave. A row of pillars at the northern end towered above the Rabbi's seat and the Chest of the

Sacred Scrolls.[1] Stone seats on either side by the walls made chief seats in the synagogue. The pillars supported the women's gallery. The women and girls did not come into the building to go up to this gallery, but climbed by an outdoor stairway of stone. From the balcony the women and girls could look down into the synagogue, and so share in the common worship of God.

Lovely bunches of carved grapes hung on curving vine-branches to recall the luscious bunches found by the exploring soldiers who, in the olden days, had gone forward from Joshua's camp to spy out the land. The seven-branched candlestick carved in stone over a window carried men's minds to the sacred candlesticks of the Temple. Any Jewish boy coming into the House of Prayer could show you, carved over the doors and windows and recesses, the five-angled design called 'Solomon's Seal', and the six-angled shield of David (with six points made of two intersecting triangles); the stars, the flowers, and the acanthus leaves. The carved censers, too, the sacred trumpets and the olive branches, were all of them Jewish designs.

A good priest from Jerusalem would raise his eyebrows and lift up his hands in horror, however, not only at the scores of carved palm trees with rich clusters of dates hanging from them, but still more at the rampant griffins and lions that raged on some of the stones. Look at those two eagles (pagan symbols of immortality) holding in their fierce beaks the ends of a Hercules' knot: this astonishing creature with a horse's head and a fish's tail. Above all, here is a carving of a little heathen temple on wheels—a car like that used for the goddess Diana at Ephesus or for the Sun-god at Heliopolis! These, with the carved laurel wreaths of Victory and the Triton's conch-shells, beautifully designed, above some of

[1] See photograph (Pl. XVI). Moved to the southern end (or entrance) some forty years later, after the Fall of Jerusalem, when all synagogue prayer began to be made towards the Holy City. The changes can be traced in the existing ruins.

the windows, were pagan Roman parts of this wonderful synagogue.[1]

And here, between two bunches of grapes on the lintel of the central door itself, was a Roman eagle—the very thing that the orthodox students in Jerusalem had given their lives to wrench down from the Temple lintel.[2] The careless Galileans themselves were little concerned for these irregularities. The friendly centurion had given them their synagogue. What did a few Roman ornaments matter? The synagogue certainly represented the strange medley of Rome, Greece, and Asia that met in Capernaum, where Roman rulers and soldiers, Greek business men and scholars, rubbed shoulders with Jewish rabbis and the common people.

The rumour had already spread among the Capernaum Jews how these young fishermen, stirred by John the Baptist's message of the Kingdom, had become followers of a new teacher, Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth. The leader of the synagogue, therefore, when the Sacred Scrolls had been read, asked Jesus to speak to them.

Seating himself in the Chair of the Rabbi, Jesus began to tell them the news of the Kingdom. All eyes were fixed on him as he talked. What was this new teaching? No longer the little laws of behaviour—'You must not do this. You must avoid that.' But words that went like a flame of light past outward behaviour to the spirit inside a man; his real self.

'Happy', said Jesus, 'are the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those that are hungry and thirsty for justice.'

Suddenly, a wild voice yelled across the heads of the people. It was the shriek of a man mad with terror.

[1] All these stones are there to-day. Reproductions of them and views of the ruins can be seen in the beautiful large quarto volume *Capharnaüm et ses ruines*, par P. Gaudence Orfali (Paris: Auguste Picard, 82 rue Bonaparte, 1922).

[2] Nearly all the animals on the stones at Capernaum have since been defaced by chisels. This was almost certainly done a century or two later, when, the Romans having destroyed the Temple, the Sanhedrin headquarters were removed from Jerusalem up to Galilee.

'Avaunt,' he cried, 'what have we to do with you, you—Jesus of Nazareth? Are you come to destroy us? I know you, who you are! The Holy One from God.'

Some of the women cried with fear; others stood in the gallery and craned over to see what was happening. The startled crowd turned in the direction of the voice. A man possessed by a daemon stood there, his face convulsed with fear.[1]

'Are you come to destroy us?' cried the daemon in the man. The crowd looked at Jesus. Jesus fixed his eyes on the man. There was a blend of pity and sternness in his look. Pity for the man who was a helpless victim; sternness to the spirit that tore him to bits.

Then Jesus' voice called to him in strong, clear, decisive words, with a ring of mastery that was irresistible.

'Come out of him,' he ordered, speaking past the man to the spirit that possessed him. 'Hold your peace, *and come out of him.*'

A wild convulsion seized the man. His face was twisted, his body tottered and reeled. Then he collapsed, writhing on the marble pavement. A shriek came as of a tormented, furious, baffled devil. Then all was still. The man rose—unhurt, serene, calm. There was a silence of amazement. Then the buzz of voices rose. Every man, each woman, turned to his and her neighbour.

'What is this? A new teaching?'

'He commanded the evil spirit.'

'Yes, and it came out of him.'

'The man is himself again.'

Out through the doors poured the congregation; out from the cool of the building into the blazing sunshine and down the steps at each end of the portico.

'Have you heard,' they said to the passers-by, as they went down the Capernaum streets: 'the young teacher—Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth—has cast a daemon out of a man in the synagogue?'

[1] On the question of possession and miracle, see Appendix, note 5.

'At his own expense he built our Synagogue for us.'

The reconstructed north end of the Synagogue at Capernaum, with its rich Corinthian capitals of acanthus leaf.

For every one then thought of people who were insane or even simply hysterical as though they were under the control of an evil spirit.

The story ran like wildfire through the town. It was the one subject of talk as men sat at dinner. The peasants, as they went out from the town to their villages, carried the story. The whole region soon rang with it. Jesus, meanwhile, leaving the synagogue with his disciples, walked down the thirteen steps at the east end of the portico and into the street. Turning to the right, they walked southward in the direction of the lake. Not a hundred yards away they turned in at the deep, shaded doorway of Simon's little house. In this house Simon lived with his wife and her mother, as well as his brother Andrew.

Simon's wife was troubled. Her mother lay in the room on her mat-bed, her face flushed with fever. Simon, in his impulsive way, went to his wife and her mother and told them, in his swift Galilean brogue, the exciting event in the synagogue.

'He cast out a daemon—the man is well. He could cure mother, too.'

So Simon turned to Jesus and asked him if he would heal the mother. Turning to where she lay on her bed, Jesus stooped and spoke to her. Then he stretched out his hand and took her hot hand in his cool, strong grasp. She felt at the touch strength flow into her which drove back the weakness and cooled the heat in her blood. Jesus, holding her hand, lifted her up. She stood cured; and at once began to go about the duties of the house to make the meal ready. Afternoon waned, and the sun went down over the rim of the Galilean hills. The Sabbath was ended as the sun set. There was a noise of voices and of the footsteps of people in the street.

Simon and Jesus went to the door. The street was packed with people. 'All the city was at my door,' said Simon, when trying to give his assistant, Mark—years later on—some idea

of the astounding scene. Here came a man with his sick boy in his arms; there a young man trailed along leaning on the arm of a friend; yonder came a worried father, his son howling like one possessed as they came down the street. Behind them, the excited people were massed.

In the swiftly gathering darkness, as the stars leapt out in the sky that deepened from purple to indigo, Jesus moved among the suffering folk in strong mastery. Here he laid his hands on a boy, speaking words that stirred him to a new strength. There he sternly cried, 'Hold your peace', as a spirit-possessed man shouted 'You are the Son of God', and added the command—'Come out of him', and healed him. The strange scene went on till the healed men and women, boys and girls, with their wondering parents and brothers and sisters went home rejoicing.

It was now night. Jesus turned into the doorway of his friend's home again. But not to sleep. Something had happened that denied sleep, for a great decision must be made. The thousands of sick in all the land would clamour for healing. He had healed that morning in the synagogue, suddenly, unexpectedly, while he was teaching the people the meaning of the coming of the Kingdom of God. And from that moment of healing he had not taught one word about the Kingdom all through the day.

He had stirred Capernaum to the depths. And to stir Capernaum was to stir not only Galilee, but far beyond. For men came and went to and from Capernaum along roads that ran from Damascus and Persia, from Antioch and from Asia Minor, from the ports on the coast and from Egypt and all North Africa. Not only Jews came there, but Phoenician merchants, Negro and Arab caravan leaders, Roman soldiers and administrators, and Greek lawyers. Capernaum was at a cross-roads where Jewish faith, Greek culture and commerce, and Roman rule met.

This, then, was the problem that Jesus was suddenly called upon to face—that the healing stopped the teaching, and yet

opened a great door, for it brought the people to Jesus. Jesus had something to give the people that would live for ever and would make a new world—a Kingdom of God. He must give that Kingdom to men so that they could pass it on and change the life of men everywhere with the wonder of the nearness of God and his power—the Love of this Father, who is ready to make each man and boy his son. Yes, but with these crowds clamouring to be healed, how could that be done? Jesus needed to see very clearly what he ought to do. So in the dead of night, while Simon slept the deep, strong sleep of a young, hard-working fisherman, Jesus quietly opened the door and went out into the now empty and silent street. In the cool night air, with the breeze moving down from the snows of Hermon to the lake, Jesus strode along. He went out of the city up to the hills where the dew-heavy anemones cooled his bare ankles and drenched his sandals.

He went up into the silence and solitude of the hills to speak with his Father about the next step in the adventure of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE OPEN ROAD

'WHERE is Jesus?'

When Simon woke next morning he was startled to find that his master had disappeared during the night. No one had heard him go. It was now dawn. There was a stir of feet coming along the street and the murmur of voices. Already folk were at the door waiting for Jesus to come out and heal them.

'Where is he?' cried Simon.

No one knew. Simon and his companions hurried out into the open country to try to find their Master. At last they discovered him on a solitary, secluded hill-top, where he had spent the dark hours before the dawn under the stars with his Father. He had already made his decision on his problem. They hurried breathlessly to him.

'Every one is looking for you. Come!' they cried.

His reply startled them.

'No,' he answered, 'let us go somewhere else, into the country towns round about, so that I can tell my Good News there too. For that is what I came to do.'

It was early summer-time as the little group of young men went along the track through the hill-side cornfields and climbed to the boulder-strewn ridge where the creamy-yellow asphodel towered above the pink blossoms of the cyclamen.

They soon came to a natural amphitheatre high among the hills. There a city called Chorazin was perched. It had a beautiful synagogue, not so large as that in Capernaum, but built of the same stone and carved with loving skill by clever Jewish masons.[1] Standing under the portico of the synagogue, Simon and the others could look down across

[1] The ruins, including second-century work done after Jesus' time, are still there. Among them is a specially fine stone chair in which the Chief Rabbi sat to hold the boy babies brought to the synagogue for the operation of circumcision that all Jewish boy children go through.

Capernaum to the fishing-boats with their sails dipping to the wind and see the scud of the little waves under the breeze that came galloping down from the snow crest of Mount Hermon.

Here, at Chorazin, Jesus stopped, and on the Sabbath went into the synagogue. His fame as a healer and a teacher had preceded him. The leaders of the synagogue here and everywhere during this, his first journey of preaching and teaching in Galilee, were glad to ask the wonderful healer and teacher to speak to the people. The people came together in their synagogues for prayer, not only on the Sabbath, but on the second day of the week and on the fifth day.[1] Crowds gathered to see Jesus, to hear and to be healed. As Simon and Andrew, James and John watched him and the faces of the folk in the synagogue, they saw how he changed the world for the men and boys alike. Power poured from him. As he fought illness and brought health to people, he did it by a loving, irresistible strength. When he showed the sternness of his wrath against all hardness, pride, and judgement of others it was the fighting vigour of his love in action against love's opposite.

The folk in Galilee were harassed by the myriad complicated rules of behaviour that the Scribes made up to explain the Law of Moses. These Traditions of the Elders as they were called, a man must obey—said the Pharisees—if he was to be saved. Some of these were good rules, others, hundreds of them, were the spinnings of spider-minds making webs to entangle and bewilder souls. Here are two examples:

'If you have a ribbon fastened to your tunic when you go to synagogue, but not sewn to it, then you are breaking the Sabbath, for you are carrying a burden.'

'If you walk on the grass, you break the Sabbath, for that is a lesser kind of threshing. If you make a furrow in the soil with your sandal you break the Sabbath, for that is a lesser kind of ploughing.'

[1] That is, our Monday and Thursday.

The Law itself was full of good rules for life; but mountains of these regulations had been piled up upon the Law. This made it so difficult to be good, so complicated to remember what was right and wrong, that the common people could never keep all the Law and all the Traditions. And yet the great teachers said that being saved depended upon doing so. The Rabbis often said: 'The common people are an accursed rabble; they neither know nor keep the Law.' Even Hillel the Great, who was the wisest and the gentlest of all the Rabbis in Jesus' day, said: 'No boor can be a sin-fearer, and the people of the land (i.e. the folk who earn their living with the work of their hands) cannot be good.'

The people longed to know the Will of God, in truths so simple that a man and his son could remember, and that his wife and girls could govern their life by, as they ground the corn, cooked the dinner, mended the garments, and talked at the village spring. That is exactly what happened to them as they listened to Jesus. He changed the world because he changed their thought of its God, its Creator. The God of the Scribes and Pharisees demanded obedience to ten thousand little rules. The God of Jesus was a holy Father, giving and asking for love. Everything that Jesus thought and said and did flowed straight from that knowledge of God's love.

The men and women who listened to him were ground down with work and worry. They were racked by taxes, terrorized by the spirits of disease, and harried by the tiny commands and forbiddings till they were cowering under a sort of prison routine. When Jesus' words came on their ears and they saw him, the prison walls fell away and the sun streamed in.

'Come unto me' (he said),
'All you who labour
And are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest.
For my yoke is easy
And my burden is light.'

And it was true—his burden was light. For he showed them the world ruled, not by a myriad little regulations of a jealous, spying, spiteful Creator, nor by the daemons of disease, but by the healing sunshine of immortal Love and Holiness. Jehovah, who had been called 'the Lord of Battles', Jesus saw to be a God who loved to paint flowers, to watch brown sparrows in the trees, who saw his Kingdom in the spirit of a child, and called for the highest heroism not in fight but in comradeship.

'You have heard it said,' he cried again:

> ' "You must love your neighbour
> And hate your enemy".
> But I tell you,
> Love your enemies,
> And pray for those who persecute you,
> That you may be the sons of your Father in Heaven.
> He makes his sun to rise on the evil and good,
> And sends rain on the just and the unjust.'

What a new world that brought of fresh air and sunlight, of confidence in God, and of freedom, faith, and courage to try to love as God loves and to endure as he endures.

'What authority he has,' whispered one to another. 'He does not teach like the Scribes.' And so it was. For, if a boy went to a Scribe and put a problem of behaviour to him, the Scribe always replied, 'Moses said this', and 'The Traditions of the Elders add that'. Jesus, however, took nothing at second-hand, but simply and fearlessly told the shining truth straight from his knowledge of God his Father.

He changed the world, too, as he healed the people. Life by the lake and among the Galilean hills was haunted by the terror of the malignant daemons that the people believed to be the causes of diseases and madness and death. The silent power and goodness that radiated from Jesus filled men with a faith that cleansed them from disease. They leapt with joy in a new world of health like a child wakened from a nightmare to find his father smiling over him in a sunlit room.

Jesus changed the world for them above all by what he was. John had said to the crowds: 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'. Jesus was the Kingdom. The Spirit of the Kingdom of God flowed from Him gaily—a fresh spring of living water, gushing happily from hidden, inexhaustible resources of power and love and holiness.

They went on from village to village, climbing by the bridle roads among the hills. Around the Lake of Galilee alone were ten cities with not less than a total of a hundred and fifty thousand people living in them. They were all busy and full of life. In Tarichaeae, for example, the rasp of the saw and the tap of the hammer rose from the boat-building yards, while fishermen incessantly sailed in and out of the little harbour with fish for salting. Millions of fish were salted there each year and were carried on camel-back and by ship to be eaten as the finest delicacies at the feasts of epicures in Athens or Heliopolis, Ephesus or Rome.

Jesus, at this time, spoke to the people in the towns and villages throughout Galilee, not only when they came together in crowds in the synagogue, but as he met them on the way. Here he found a group resting in the shade of a fig-orchard. There he stopped to greet some men tending the vines. Or, again, he joined the noontide siesta of harvesters who had all the morning been reaping the barley with their small, curved sickles.

All went well until one day, when Jesus was away from the crowd, a man came to him afflicted with a disease of the skin.[1] Because of this disease, the man was not allowed to go among his friends or mix with people, but had to live alone, shunned by everybody. The disease itself was dreadful; but the feeling of being avoided by everybody as a polluting, offensive thing was more horrible still. The man had seen Jesus heal others. Could he not heal him? Yes the man was sure that he could. So he came to Jesus and threw himself down on his knees in front of him. He begged him for help.

[1] See Appendix, note 6.

'If only you are willing,' cried the man, lifting his scaly face and his tainted hands and arms, 'you can make me clean.'

Jesus looked down at the man. His heart leapt in pity.

'I am willing,' he answered, and then he did what no one had done to that man for long months or years. He stretched out his hand and with his fingers touched the man's skin. 'Become clean.'

The scales disappeared. The skin came clean. Jesus looked very sternly at the man, who could not contain himself for joy.

'On no account are you to say anything about this to any one. Go to Jerusalem to the Priest. Make the offerings in the Temple in thanksgiving for your cleansing according to the directions given by Moses, to notify your cleansing to men.'

No sooner was the man away, however, than he began to call aloud to every one in his excited joy. 'Look, I am cleansed; I am cleansed. Jesus, the Rabbi, has cleansed me by his touch.' Far and wide he spread the news. It ran like wildfire. The thing happened that Jesus had feared when he told the man not to talk about the cure. Immense crowds surged and pressed round him when he went into any city. There were not only the sick coming for healing, but the myriads of curiosity-mongers anxious to see the amazing things that they expected he would do. As a result, Jesus could not go openly into any town. He stayed outside in lonely places, with his men, teaching them. Yet all the time from every direction people came pouring across the hillsides to him.

Thickly-populated Galilee was stirred to the depths. Suddenly, a Man had appeared who taught them of the Kingdom; who cast out daemons; who conquered disease; who made them feel that at long last God had broken through into the human scene. The stir and rumour of excited throngs of people was round him—people hungry for life. Jesus was trying to show them that all that they could long

for was there, at hand, waiting to be used: the Kingdom of God waiting to welcome men and boys, women and girls—his children.

It was to tell this Good News that Jesus was travelling the donkey tracks and camel caravan trails of Galilee. Galilee was now astir. One morning, a few days after the cleansing of the man with the tortured skin, Jesus turned his face again towards home—Capernaum.

CHAPTER XXVIII

'HAPPY ARE YOU'

SEEING the people who had come from all sides to him, crowds so great that his voice could never reach them all, Jesus took up afresh the work of teaching his Good News to the young men who had become his disciples, so that they could carry it to others. One morning, very early, before the crowds were out, he took the group up a high hill near Capernaum.

Up there in a coign of the mountain he sat down. Simon and Andrew, James and John, and the rest of the young men with him lay stretched out on the grass or sat leaning against boulders. They listened, drinking in what he said. There was no noise of bustling crowds. Yet even here, as the day drew on, the crowds began to come up and gather round and listen as he taught his disciples.

As the group looked down from their hill-top they could see the pear-shaped lake, a shining turquoise pendant on the breast of Galilee, lying deep between the swelling hills. Like mayflies, the brown-sailed fisher-boats skimmed over the lake. On their left the brawling, infant Jordan ran into the broad, northern end of the sea. On their right, a dark emerald by the turquoise, lay the green olive and fig and walnut orchards of the Plain of Gennesaret set in the bronze of the hills. Looking north-east, the disciples saw the turban of snow on the head of 'The Sheikh'—Mount Hermon—gleaming down upon them.

Their eyes and ears, however, were now upon their own Master. As he looked into their bronzed young faces he saw the hero-worship in their eyes. They were listening to truth more soaring than any that Socrates had spoken under the shade of the groves in Greece, and deeper than any that Aristotle had taught to his royal young pupil, Alexander,

who quickly became the world-shaking conqueror. Yet what Jesus taught them was full of pictures that every one of them could easily remember.

He began with sayings that spoke of men as 'blessed', or 'Happy'. 'Beatitudes' they are called, from the word with which each sentence begins in the Latin translation. Moses too had begun his great sermon with Beatitudes.[1] Jesus knew that sermon by heart. He quoted it twice when fighting the Spirit of Evil in the Temptation.[2] He now opened his talk to his men with Beatitudes.

What he said engraved itself in their minds so that they never forgot his words and were able years later to write them down unchanged. Jesus used three helps to the memory. The first of these helps is the very simple one that men call 'parallelism'. It is a memory help by which a similar thought is said twice over in slightly different ways. We find it hundreds of times in the Psalms and in Proverbs. For instance,

> 'The trees of the Lord are full of sap;
> The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
>
> 'Where the birds make their nests:
> As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.
>
> 'The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats;
> And the rocks for the conies.'

The second help that Jesus used was rhythm; the third was rhyme.[3] All the translations, and even the Greek story of this mountain-talk by Jesus, in the Gospel of St. Matthew have lost this rhythm and rhyme. But men have now translated from the Greek into which the writer put Jesus'

[1] Deuteronomy xxviii. 1–10. Moses' whole discourse covers Deuteronomy xxviii–xxix.

[2] See Chapter XVII.

[3] All nations use rhyme and rhythm to help memory. For example, we find both in such English proverbs as 'Birds of a feather flock together'; or 'A stitch in time saves nine'; or 'Red night, shepherd's delight; red morning, shepherd's warning'.

sayings back into the Aramaic that he spoke. Here are the first four sentences of this talk put back into Aramaic.[1]

(1) Tube*hon* misk*nayya*
dedile*hon* malkuta *dismayya.*

(2) Tube*hon* de*mit*abbe*lin.*
dehin*nun mit*nahha*min.*

(3) Tube*hon* inwa*nayya*
dehin*nun* yeretun *leara.*

(4) Tube*hon* dekaphenin wesa*hayin*
dehin*nun* mitme*layin.*

If we read those words aloud, putting the accent on the letters printed in italics, we hear how easy it would be to remember, especially when the words carry such wonderful meaning as these four sentences, which, in our language, run:

'Happy [2] the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
Happy the mourners,
For they will be comforted.
Happy the gentle,
For they will be heirs of the earth.
Happy they who hunger and thirst for goodness,
For they will be satisfied.'

'The poor in spirit' are those who have nothing of their own in the world, but are entirely dependent—as a boy is upon his father. 'Mourners' are not just those 'in mourning', but those who are stirred and troubled in heart by wrong in the world and want to bring in the Kingdom on earth. The word

[1] This use of parallelism, rhythm, and rhyme has been clearly and finely shown in *The Poetry of our Lord*, by Dr. C. F. Burney (Oxford University Press), on p. 116 of which the above quotation will be found; and *Une Nouvelle Psychologie du Langage*, par Frederic Lefevre. (Plon, Paris).

[2] The original word is not the past participle of 'bless' and means 'blessed' only in the sense of the deepest, most real happiness. The French, e.g., translate it with 'Heureux'.

translated 'meek' stands for men filled with loving-kindness [1] and tender mercy:

'Happy the merciful,
For they will find mercy
Happy are the pure in heart [2].
For they shall see God.
Happy are the artisans of peace,
For they will rank as sons of God.
Happy those who are persecuted for their goodness,
The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.'

And he turned to his men and fixed his eyes upon them:

'Happy are you when people taunt you
And persecute you
And say everything evil about you
Untruly and on my account.
Be glad; be full of joy!
For your reward in Heaven will be great
Because so men persecuted the Prophets who lived before you.

To take with a laughing heart, gallantly, contempt and hard blows for the sake of Jesus, that was a knightly call. In this way Jesus taught his men to know who are the children of God.

'Yes,' he went on, 'You are the salt of the earth.
But if the salt should lose its strength,
What will you do to restore its savour.
It is no longer good for anything.
It is thrown away and trampled under foot.'

Salt—how every one of his hearers knew its uses. That city, Tarichaea, where the fish were pickled, might well be translated 'The Salteries'. The fish that Simon and Andrew caught were salted there as delicacies for the epicures of the Roman Empire, with salt that came up the Jordan valley

[1] A fine French translation says 'Heureux les débonnaires'; and again, for the peacemakers, 'les artisans de la paix'.
[2] The word stands for translucent cleanness of body and mind and spirit.

from the cliffs by the Dead Sea. Indeed, the Dead Sea water was so full of salt that three pounds of water when evaporated gave one pound of salt. With that salt Simon's wife preserved the olives or butter or cheese. The wonderful thing about salt was that it brought out, not so much its own taste, as the true flavour of the olives or the butter or the fish that it preserved. That was how they were 'the salt of the earth'—preserving and strengthening the good in men.

If salt was adulterated with sand, however, as it often was because of the heavy salt-tax paid by the people to the Romans—then it had no savour; it was useless except to be cast out and trodden into the earth. Most of all, there flashed into the minds of the men the salt floor to the mud-ovens in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Zebedee's wife, the mother of James and John, baked the bread every day. Those salt-floors held the heat; but when they had lost their savour they became useless and were just dug out and thrown into the road, to be replaced by new salt.

'Yes,' he said again, changing the picture; 'you are the Light of the World. A town,' and his hand pointed to the distant mountain crowned with the city of Safed, 'a town that stands on a hill cannot be hid.'

'Men do not,' he went on, his eyes twinkling humorously at the absurdity, 'light a lamp, and put it under a corn-measure. No, they put it on a lamp-stand, where it gives light to everybody in the house.'

'Let your light so shine before the eyes of your fellow-men that, seeing your good deeds, they may praise your Father who is in Heaven.'

CHAPTER XXIX

LIKE THE FATHER

A PHARISEE, talking to a Scribe in the crowd that now encircled the group of disciples, with Jesus in the centre, would certainly cry out that in all this teaching he had not quoted the Law of Moses which was the rule of life.

'Do not think,' Jesus went on, answering such a critic in advance, 'that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. No, I am come not to destroy them, but to fulfil. Truly, I say to you that till heaven and earth pass away, not one letter 'i', one 'iota', not one comma, will pass away from the Law till it all has been put into effect. So whoever breaks one of these rules—even the least—will be one of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever practises and teaches them will take high rank in the Kingdom of Heaven. 'I tell you that, unless your goodness is greater than that of the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Jesus then went on to give some startling illustrations of this

'You have heard,' he said, quoting from the Law, 'how the folk of old were commanded: "Murder not";[1] but I say that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of judgement. You have heard it said'—quoting from the next sentence of the Law—' "You must not swear falsely",[2] but perform your vows to the Lord;[3] but I say that you must not swear by an oath,

'neither by heaven,
for it is God's throne;
nor by earth,
for it is God's footstool;
nor by Jerusalem,
for it is the great King's city.

[1] Exodus xx. 13. [2] Exodus xx. 16. [3] Numbers xxx. 3.

'And do not swear by your head,
For you cannot make one hair white or black,
Let what you say be a straight "yes" or "no",
Anything beyond that comes from evil.'

'You have heard, again, how it was said'—and here again Jesus quotes a slightly later sentence of the Law—' "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" [1] but I say unto you,

'Do not resist an injury.
If anyone strikes you on the right cheek,
Turn the other to him as well.
If a man sues you for your tunic,
Let him have your coat too.
If, as "forced labour", you are made to go a mile,
Go two miles with him.
To him who asks, give;
From him who would borrow, do not turn away.'

These sayings took their breath away. They were easy to understand so far as their meaning was concerned, but difficult for human nature to carry out. Especially hard would it be for a hot-tempered Galilean patriot, when ordered—as a kind of forced labour due from a member of a subject race—to carry the luggage of a Roman officer for a mile, to go voluntarily a second mile.

'How', a Pharisee in the crowd might well ask, 'can Jesus say that he is telling them to do even more than I do in obeying the Law, when he first quotes the Law and then tells them to do something different?' Jesus, for instance, quoted 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' and then seemed to contradict it, by saying, 'Do not resist an injury'. But it was not a contradiction of the original idea of that saying. For among the wild desert Arabs and even among the Jewish people themselves in their earlier tribal days, when a man of one tribe had knocked out the eye of a man of another tribe, then the injured man (or his brothers or sons) would go out

[1] Exodus xxi. 24.

on the trail and try—not just to take one eye—but to kill the other man. So, in its origin, 'An eye for an eye' was a command of mercy and of justice based on equal punishment. 'You may take one eye—but not more,' was the object of the command.[1] But that Law, which was made as a step towards mercy, was now used in Jesus' time to justify hard, cold punishment. Jesus lifted the Law right up into complete mercy in the Kingdom of the Father.

Long centuries earlier, again, the Jews had had the Law 'Love your neighbours'.[2] Even the Egyptians were to be loved, although foreigners. That was because they fed the famine-stricken Israelites. But the Arab Ammonites and Moabites, the wild folk on the east of the Jordan, were not to be loved. 'You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity, all your days for ever.' Jesus sweeps away all these limits. You have heard that it was said: 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy,' but I say:

'Love your enemies,
Pray for those who persecute you,
That you may be sons of your Father in Heaven.
He makes his sun rise on the wicked as well as the good.
And sends rain on the just and the unjust.

If you love only those who love you,
What reward have you earned.
Do not the very tax-collectors do as much?
And if you say "Salaam" only to your relatives,
What praise is due for that?
Do not even the pagans as much?

Your goodness must be perfect
As your Father in Heaven is perfect.'

'Take care', he went on, 'not to do your good deeds in front of men in order to attract notice.'

'When you make a gift
Do not have a trumpet blown in front of you,

[1] For examples of these blood-feuds see Genesis ix. 6; Numbers xxxv. 21; Deuteronomy xix. 21, and 2 Samuel iii. 27. [2] Leviticus xix. 18.

Like the show-acting folk in the synagogues and the streets,
So that men shall applaud.
They already have their reward.
Do not, when you make gifts, let your left hand know what your right hand does.
Then your Father in Heaven—he who sees in secret—will reward you.
When you pray, too,
Do not stand, like these play-actors,
In the synagogues and at the corners of the streets,
So that men may see them.
They too, already have their reward, I tell you.
But go into your own room and shut the door.
There pray to your Father in Heaven—he who sees in secret—and he will reward you.[1]

All Jesus' hearers had seen a desert Arab, or an Egyptian camel-driver, or a Tyrian or Phoenician merchant stop at sunset by the road to reel off his prayers by rote to appease his god, though the words were almost meaningless. Jesus attacks this way of vain repetition. 'When you pray,' he said, 'do not use idle rote like the pagans.'

'Pray then in this way;' he went on concentrating the worship and need of man in few and lovely words:[2]

'Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our bread for the day
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

[1] The balance, rhythm, and repetition of form are largely hidden in the translated form of these sayings, but a careful reading of, for instance, the last two paragraphs will show how Jesus uses a kind of repetitive structure that—as in a sonnet or a symphony—helps the memory.
[2] Translated back into Aramaic the Lord's Prayer is a poem with rhythm and rhyme. See Burney's *The Poetry of our Lord.*

And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom,
And the power and the glory,
For ever. Amen.'

All Jesus' hearers, too, had seen men in the street with rough sackcloth tunics and their faces lined with ashes to show that they were fasting. He attacked this show-acting.

'Whenever you fast,' he said, 'perfume your hair and wash your face. Your Father,' he repeated, 'who sees in secret, will reward you. . . .'

'Do not store up wealth for yourselves on earth,' pursued Jesus:

'Where moth and rust destroy,
And where thieves break through and steal.
But store up wealth for yourselves in heaven,
Where moth and rust do not destroy,
And where no thieves break through and steal;
For where your wealth is,
There will your heart be too.

'The eye is the lamp of the body.
If then your eyesight is good,
Your whole body will be illuminated;
But if your eyesight is bad,
Then your whole body will be dark.
If your very light becomes dark,
How dense that darkness is.

'No man can be in the service of two masters.
He will either hate one and love the other,
Or he will be attached to one and neglect the other.
You cannot serve God and Mammon.

'So, I tell you, not to be over-anxious about your life,
Asking "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?"
Nor about your bodies,

'. . . the grass, which . . . is cast into the oven.'

A bread oven in Nazareth; view looking toward the western hill.

Asking, "What shall I wear?"
Life is more than its food,
And the body than its clothes.

'Look at the birds that fly in the air,'

he cried, with a gesture of his hand to the swallow skimming overhead and the sparrows flitting from shrub to boulder and from the back of a sheep to the branch of a blossom-covered fruit tree,

'They do not sow or reap,
Nor do they gather crops into barns;
But your Father in Heaven feeds them.
Are you not worth more than the birds.
Which of you can add the height of your finger by worrying about it;
Why then worry about your clothes?'

Then he pointed to the blaze of scarlet anemones that dressed the hill with gorgeous colour; while the exquisite pink of the dwarf cyclamen and the creamy pearl of the stately asphodel, as well as the sapphire and turquoise thistles, were like jewelled embroidery on the shoulders of the mountain.

'Look,' he said, 'how the flowers of the field grow;
They do not toil, nor spin.
And yet, I tell you, Solomon in all his glory
Was not arrayed like one of these.

'If, then,' and he pointed to mothers and children gathering bundles of thistles and other flowers and shrub-twigs for fuel for the cooking of the evening bread in the domestic ovens, 'if God so clothes the wild herbage of the field that blooms to-day and to-morrow is thrown into the oven, will not he much more clothe you?

'Oh men, how little is your trust in him.
Do not be over-anxious, crying
"What are we to eat?" or
"What are we to drink?" or

"With what are we to clothe ourselves?"
These are the things which pagans make their aim in life.
For your Father in Heaven knows well your need of these things,
All of them.
Make his Kingdom and goodness your aim.
Then these things will be yours over and above.
Do not worry about to-morrow;
To-morrow will take care of itself.
The day's own cares are enough for the day.'

CHAPTER XXX

BUILDING ON ROCK

JESUS now turned from telling them not to worry about their own lives and began to warn them—with humorous analogies from the carpenter's shop and the farm—about what they did with other people's lives.

'Do not judge,' he said, 'so that you may not be judged.
For as you judge you will be judged,
And what you deal out to others will be dealt to you.
Why do you gaze at the splinter in your brother's eye,
And do not notice the plank of timber in your own?
How can you say to your brother,
"Let me take that splinter out of your eye,"
While there is a plank in your own?
Play-actor! First take the plank out of your own eye.
Then you will see clearly enough to remove the speck from your brother's.

'Do not give sacred things to dogs,
Nor throw pearls before the hogs,
In case they trample them under hoof;
And turn and gore you.

'Ask, and it will be given unto you;
Seek, and you will find;
Knock and the door will be opened to you.
For the man who asks, receives;
He who seeks, finds;
And to him who knocks the door is opened.

'Why,' and he smiled as he put the question to the fathers, 'which of you, when his son asks him for a loaf, will offer him a stone? Or if his son ask for a fish, will he offer him a serpent? Well, then, if, wicked as you are, you know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask Him?

'Everything, therefore, that you would have men do to you, do you the same to them; in this the Law and the Prophets are summed up.

'Go in by the narrow gate.
For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to ruin.
And there are many go in by that way.
But the gate and the road that lead to life are narrow,
And there are few that find the way.

'Beware of false teachers. They come to you covered in sheepskin; but under the disguise they are ravenous wolves.

'You will know them by their fruit.
Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes;
Or figs from thistles?
No, every good tree bears good fruit.
But a bad tree bears rotten fruit.
A good tree cannot bear bad fruit,
Nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.
So by their fruit you will know them.
Any tree that does not bear good fruit,
Will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

'Nor is it everybody who greets me with "Lord, Lord,"
Who will go into the Kingdom of Heaven;
It is he who does the will of my Father in Heaven.
In that day many will say to me
"Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?
Did we not cast out daemons in your name?
Did we not do many miracles in your name?"
Then will I say to them plainly, "I never knew you;
Begone from me, you workers of wickedness."'

Thus Jesus ended his teaching for that day. He now gave them one last word on doing what they had heard.

'Everyone, now, who listens to these my teachings,
And acts upon them,
Will be like the wise man

Who built his house on the rock;
And the heavy rain poured down;
The swollen streams swirled along;
And the winds blew and beat on that house.
But it did not fall for it was founded on rock.

'Everyone, however, who listens to these words of mine
And does not act on them
Will be like the stupid man
Who built his house upon the sand.
The heavy rain poured down;
The swollen streams swirled;
The winds blew and beat upon the house
And it fell—with a mighty crash!'

PART IV

THE GATHERING STORM

CHAPTER XXXI

FIRST MUTTERINGS

JESUS now went down with his friends from the hill-top into Capernaum. They were going along the streets in the city when a group of old men, men who were leaders in the synagogue there, came hurrying toward him.

'Sir,' they said, breathlessly, when they had come up with him, 'we have come to speak to you on behalf of a friend of ours, a Roman centurion here. His slave, by whom he sets great store, is very ill, indeed at the point of death. This officer asks us to beseech you to come and make his slave well. He deserves to have this favour granted him,' they went on, 'for he loves our nation. At his own expense, he built our synagogue for us.' [1]

Jesus was not held back at all by the fact that the centurion was an alien officer of another race in the army of occupation that held his nation in subjection to Rome. He swept aside all thought of race or of nationalistic pride.

'I will come,' he answered at once.

The group started to lead him towards the centurion's house. Behind them trailed a crowd eager to see what would happen. A centurion was the captain of a hundred men in the Roman army. This centurion was evidently a rich and generous man, who—like many Romans who despised the worn-out myths about Jupiter, Hercules, and the other gods—was attracted by the Jews' pure worship of one holy, invisible God. This centurion had built the beautiful and stately synagogue at Capernaum in which the Jews could meet and worship. He was not only generous, but kind-hearted. He was now straining every nerve to save the life of a slave.

Jesus was, by this time, near the centurion's house. Another little group came hurrying towards him. They were friends

[1] See Chapter XXVI.

of the Roman officer, who brought a message. Jesus stopped to greet them. The message that the centurion had sent ran thus:

'Sir, do not trouble yourself. I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; so I do not regard myself as worthy to come to you. Say the word, and let my slave be cured. I am a man under authority; and I have soldiers under me. I say to one "Go," and he goes; to another "Come," and he comes; and to my slave "Do this," and he does it.'

Jesus was astonished as he listened. Here was a Roman, a Gentile pagan, showing this splendid faith. He turned from the messengers to the crowd behind him.

'I tell you I have not met so great faith as this,' he said, 'in any Israelite'.

Turning to the friends of the centurion, he sent him this message:

'As you have believed, so let it be.'

They hurried back into the centurion's home and found everybody in great excitement. The slave was already well.

Jesus went into the house where he made his home in Capernaum. He began talking with his group. The rumour swiftly went round that Jesus was in the town. The Scribes, the leaders of the synagogue, felt that they must get closer knowledge of this man's teaching. His influence was becoming enormous. Was he to be trusted? Was he dangerous? They must know. So they came in at the door. Soon the place was crowded to excess. And even the doorway was darkened with the craning heads of the crowd of old and young who were trying to get in to see Jesus.

Suddenly there was a sound of a thud above their heads. Then a wrenching of rafters. Every one looked up. The sunshine came through. Then it was darkened again. A youth was being let down on a mat-bed. The young man was paralysed. His friends, hearing of the healing of the slave of the centurion, believed that Jesus could heal this youth too. They were determined, come what might, to get him

to Jesus. They reached the door. It was impossible to get in. No one would make way for them. There was a stone stairway outside to the roof. The young men bore their friend up this stair on a litter on which his mat-bed was spread. When they were on the flat roof, they deliberately broke it open above the room where Jesus was. They made a place large enough to let their friend down, litter and all.[1] Jesus, in whom God's spirit was strongly present to heal, and who was deeply stirred by their faith, turned to the sick fellow and said:

'Be glad, my son,[2] your sins are forgiven.'

'What,' muttered one Scribe to another. 'Why does this man talk like that? It is blasphemy. Who can forgive sins except God alone?'

Realizing that the Scribes were arguing like this and criticizing him, Jesus turned on them and said:

'Why debate like that in your hearts? Which is easier: to say "Your sins are forgiven", or "Rise and walk"? Just to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' and he turned to the paralysed youth, 'I tell you, rise, take up your litter and go home.'

Then and there the young fellow stood up in front of them all, caught up the litter on which he had been lying, and crying 'God be praised! God be praised!' walked straight out through the avenue that the crowd swiftly made for him. Amazement gripped them all. They echoed the young man's 'Glory to God'; but behind that was a deep feeling of awe, almost of fear. 'We have seen incredible things to-day,' they whispered to one another as they went to their homes.

As Jesus went out after this he passed by a tax-gatherer sitting at the customs office. Levi was one of his names—

[1] Three different words are used, the first, by Mark, meaning a mat that a poor man would have; the second, by Matthew and Luke, which can mean just a mat or a more elaborate couch; and the third, by Luke, with the doctor's characteristic precision, a sick person's litter.

[2] *Teknon*, which is a child, but is affectionately used of those older than childhood.

Matthew was the other. The caravans that came from east and west paid duty here as they passed through Capernaum. And Matthew, like many of his despised profession—Jews who collected taxes for their Roman rulers, getting what they could from the people—had grown rich. Matthew, however, had been gripped by the power of Jesus' personality.

'Follow me,' said the Master. Matthew left everything and followed him.

This new disciple had a large house. He invited a good number of his friends to a banquet there in honour of his Master. The disciples Simon and Andrew and James and John were invited. There was a large group of tax-gatherers, friends of Matthew, among the guests. This was not at all the kind of company that the orthodox or the patriotic Jews would think respectable. The next day they expostulated bitterly, complaining to the disciples of the way Jesus was behaving.

'Why do you eat and drink with tax-gatherers and sinners?' they growled.

Jesus intervened.

'Healthy folk have no need of a doctor,' he said; 'but the sick have. I did not come to call the righteous to repent, but sinners.'

They returned to the charge.

'The disciples of John the Baptist,' they said, 'fast frequently and offer prayers. So do the disciples of the Pharisees. But yours eat and drink.'

'Can you make a bridal party fast,' Jesus asked in reply, 'while the bridegroom is with them? But a time for fasting will come, when the bridegroom is taken from them. Now they feast; then they will fast.'

These grumblings in the midst of the overwhelming popularity of Jesus were the first mutterings of a storm whose clouds grew larger and more threatening as the leaders began to see that Jesus' new teaching challenged the old established ways.

Jesus saw the cause of this. To describe it, he, at that time, put to them a parable about the effect of new teaching on old ideas. It was based on a recollection of what he had learned at home watching his mother mending the clothes that the boys so often tore.

'No one,' he said, 'takes a new piece of cloth to sew it on to an old cloak. If he does, the new cloth will tear the old and make it worse. No one pours fresh wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine fermenting will burst the skins. The wine will be spilt; the skins will be ruined. Fresh wine must be poured into new wineskins. So both will be preserved.'

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PLOTTERS

JESUS walked at that time with his men through the corn-fields on the Sabbath. These crops stretched out on the Plain of Gennesaret and up the sloping hill-sides behind Capernaum for miles. Some Pharisees were walking with them to hear what Jesus had to say.

The Capernaum wheat was famous in the Roman world. The wheat harvest there comes in May or at latest in early June, and the barley some weeks earlier. The breeze swayed the ears on the strong stalks; the lights and shadows sweeping in waves across the sea of old-gold. The ears of corn were full enough to eat, but had not yet come to harvesting. John, Simon, and the others were young, lusty men, with a healthy hunger sharpened by life out of doors. They plucked some corn and rolled the ears in the palms of their hands so that the ripe grains of wheat came out. They munched the delicious grains as they walked and listened to Jesus.

'Look,' grumbled a Pharisee, interrupting Jesus, 'why do your followers break the Law, doing on the Sabbath what is forbidden?'

The act of plucking the farmer's corn was not challenged. Indeed, the Law specially said—'When you pass your neighbour's standing corn, you may pull some ears with your hand, but you must never put in the sickle'.[1] What was forbidden by the Tradition of the Elders was to pluck corn on the Sabbath. That, they said, is a form of reaping. To roll it in the hands was, they added, a form of threshing.

To keep the Sabbath from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday was—they believed—at the very foundation of their Faith. If you broke the Sabbath, you should, according to the Law of Moses, be stoned to death. Twice in successive

[1] Deuteronomy xxiii. 25.

sentences the Law reiterates that whoever works on the Sabbath 'shall surely be put to death'. [1]

'Have you never read of what David did?' asked Jesus, in reply, with a flash of humour in challenging the scholars on their own ground of book-knowledge of the Word of God. 'When David was in need and hungry, what did he and the men with him do? Why! they actually went into the House of God. They ate the sacred loaf which it was unlawful for anyone to eat except the priests alone. And David gave some of it to the men with him.'

'The Sabbath was made for man,' said Jesus to them, 'and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'

This incident in the cornfields of Capernaum made the Pharisees more alert than ever to watch Jesus until he did something so revolutionary that the Jerusalem authorities could start to deal seriously with him. What he had already done was, in their view, bad enough. He taught as though he and not Moses was the final authority. He had dared to forgive sin, which God alone could do. He consorted with tax-collectors and pagan sinners, which no really good man or prophet would do. He broke the Sabbath and backed up his followers in doing so. Clearly he was a dangerous revolutionary. So they argued. They watched to catch him in something that would justify calling to arrest him either the Jerusalem Sanhedrin or Herod Antipas as the Ruler of Galilee, or both.

The Pharisees had not long to wait. Jesus and his youths, with the group of Pharisees mingled with them, walked back along the narrow path through the cornfields to the outskirts of the town and then through the streets of Capernaum itself. He went up the steps into the synagogue. Among the people there stood a man, one of whose hands hung uselessly by his side. Jesus' fame as a healer of the bodies of men was, as we have seen, all over the land. What would he do?

[1] Exodus xxi. 13–17.

The Pharisees stood in a group between two of the pillars. They looked from him to the man and back again. Was their chance coming?

'Will he heal this man on the Sabbath day?' they whispered to one another. 'If he does, we can accuse him.'

Jesus might easily have waited till the next day to heal the man, and so have avoided all trouble with the Pharisees. After all, the man had had his arm like that for long; what difference would one more day make? But that was not Jesus' way. His spirit leapt to the challenge. It was a matter of life against law; the spirit against the letter; love against hardness; courage against cowardice.

Simon rejoiced as he saw his leader was going to challenge everything. Every word and look of the scene (of which Simon dictated a description years later) engraved itself on his memory.

'Stand forward,' Jesus' voice rang out. The man with the withered hand at once stepped out from the crowd.

'What is lawful on the Sabbath day?' asked Jesus, facing the Pharisees squarely, with sharp, short questions. 'To do good, or to do harm. To save life, or to kill?'

That last terrible question burned deep indeed. For at that very moment the aim that was in their own minds was 'to kill'. To kill him in order to save God's Law! They honestly believed that that was their duty.

'What man is there among you,' he challenged them again, 'that shall have a sheep and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much is a man of more value than a sheep!'

A cold, cowardly silence held the group of Pharisees. They would not agree with him that it was best 'to save a life'; they dare not say what was for them that day the truth—'to kill'. As Jesus waited and saw the cruelty of their piety, anger burned in him. Mark uses here the word for strong, burning indignation that is only twice employed about

Jesus.[1] And he adds another strong word meaning that 'he was deeply hurt, greatly pained'. The hardening of their heart for what they believed was the will of God cut Jesus to the quick. It was cruel to man; it caricatured God.

He swung round from the Pharisees back to the man.

'Stretch out your hand!' His voice again rang through the great building. The man, whose arm had hung limp and useless by his side, raised it. Life was changed. He could work; he could do things that had been impossible; he was whole.

It was the turning-point of that man's life. But it was more; it was a turning-point of Jesus' life. The Pharisees were stung to fury; filled with madness. Simon and Jesus' other followers watched the group of them as they hurried out through the doors of the synagogue into the street. That very afternoon these Pharisees got together with the group of leaders who stood for making Herod Antipas all-powerful and so were hotly opposed to any popular nationalist movement such as John the Baptist—and now Jesus—seemed to be leading.

These two groups worked out a plot. It would be impossible (they saw clearly) to get Jesus condemned to death by the Roman ruler—Pontius Pilate—who alone had power of life and death—on a charge of breaking the Law of Moses about the Sabbath. They might manage it, however, on a charge against Jesus of rebellion; of trying to become King of the Jews.

Indeed, if he wanted to be King, now was the time to raise the banner of revolt. The tide of enthusiasm for him as healer and national leader surged across the land. The people came from the towns and villages of Galilee, from the hills and the sea, and even beyond, from the distant shore of the Great Sea, the cities of Tyre and Sidon; they came streaming from Judaea to the south, with crowds even from Jeru-

[1] The other occasion was when the disciples drove back the mothers and their children from Jesus.

salem itself. From the east they poured across the Jordan. The throng was indescribably great. (Simon, years later, trying to put it into words, broke down and just murmured repeatedly—'a great multitude—a great multitude'—twice in one sentence.)

No wonder that Herod Antipas was worried; and that the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem began to tremble for the Law. All the world running to this young leader who was—it seemed—threatening the rule of Rome by talking of a Kingdom of God—the usual rebel watchword!—and breaking down the Sanhedrin rule by teaching that man is above the Law of the Sabbath.

Jesus heard of this combined plot of the Pharisees and Herodians. He saw the danger, on the other side, that the crowd might be seized with a mass movement to make him their King. He determined to avoid both perils.

He saw that, at all costs, he must now make sure that, even if he were imprisoned or killed, his Good News would still be told by others.

At nightfall he went quietly away up into the hill behind Capernaum. There all through the night, under the stars and with the winds from the mountains breathing on him, he prayed to God. His enemies were plotting his death. He had no fear for himself, but for his work. The seething, suffering, excited crowds were like sheep with no shepherd. What must he do?

He had fellowship with God through the night. With the day, light came. He called for a number of his men to come to him quietly up on the hill. This hill or mountain was the high place where he had given his men the very heart of his teaching. There, that morning, he chose twelve of them to be, not only learners from him, but teachers of his message.

He risked the success or failure of his work on these men; impetuous, blundering, loyal Simon Peter, and his steadier brother, Andrew, who was always alert to bring new folk to Jesus. John and James, those boyish, hot-tempered, enthusi-

astic Galileans who were ready to face life and death for the Prince of their young lives; Matthew, the well-to-do ex-tax-gatherer, who had spent his life learning the worst of human nature at his customs-desk, and now had left the worst in order to serve the best; the flaming, patriotic zealot, Simon; the reserved, hesitant, sceptical Thomas, who, when once convinced, gave all that he had; and the man from the town of Kerioth, named Judas, who in his secret spirit owed a divided loyalty.

They came together down the hill-side into the city. No sooner had he come down and was indoors again than the crowd came pouring down the street and massed about the house, pressing into the courtyard in a clamour to be healed. The press and turmoil were so overwhelming that they could not even get freedom to eat a meal.

The waves of excitement that swept and swirled over the land distressed Jesus' family. They were, after all, a law-abiding artisan family in a little town sheltered among the hills. Jesus had suddenly broken from home and gone off on this wild adventure. His revolutionary deeds, his law-breaking, his mixing with bad people, his new teaching—all made them sure that he was unhinged in his mind. His mother and his brothers came from Nazareth to Capernaum. They tried to get hold of him, with the idea of taking him back home with them.

'What is really the matter', corrected some of the Scribes who had been sent by the authorities all the way from Jerusalem to watch him, 'is that he is possessed by Beelzebub. He casts out daemons with the authority of the prince of daemons.'

Jesus, hearing this, challenged them.

'Come,' he said, 'how can Satan cast out Satan?'

> 'If a Kingdom is divided against itself
> The Kingdom cannot stand:
> If a home is divided against itself
> That home cannot stand:

Just so, if Satan has risen against himself,
And is divided,
He cannot stand, and comes to an end.
No one can go into a strong man's home
And rob him of his goods,
Unless first of all he binds the strong man,
Then he can rob him.'

A dense crowd was sitting on the ground all around Jesus in the courtyard of the house. His brothers and his mother were now standing outside the house on the edge of the crowd. They could not get into the courtyard for the multitude. Word was passed through the crowd.

'Here are your mother, and brothers, and sisters, wanting you outside,' they said to him.

This tragic misunderstanding by his own relatives was now added to the antagonism of the Scribes and Pharisees. The spies of Herod were also watching to take him. The crowd, he knew, he could not rely upon. There was only one group that were really loyally attached to him.

'Who are my mother and my brothers?' he asked. Then, looking at the men and women who were ready to give up everything to be with him and to do what he said, gazing with love at Simon and Andrew, James and John, with their mother and her husband, Zebedee, Matthew and Thomas, and the rest, he said to those who had told him that his relatives waited outside, pointing to the disciples:

'These are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, that is my brother and sister and mother.'

'*A lovely little bay, shaped like a horseshoe, with shelving shores.*'
The bay near Capernaum in which Jesus taught from Peter's boat.

CHAPTER XXXIII

STORIES FROM THE BOAT

STILL the crowds came pouring in from all sides. Every one talked of the new Prophet of the Kingdom of God. Would he lead a new revolution? Would he, with the power of God, sweep away the despotism of Rome and set up a new reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem? Young disciples of John, now that their prophet was thrown into the dungeons of Machaerus, hurried to join themselves to Jesus. The records about this time are full of the press and murmur and excitement of innumerable multitudes. The people almost trampled on one another. It was impossible for them, all standing in a crowd, to hear him or for him to see them.

One day Jesus, wishing to teach the multitude, adopted a new plan. Ten minutes' sail eastward of Capernaum, along the shore of the lake is a lovely little bay, shaped like a horse-shoe, the sides being longer than the curved end. It has rather shelving shores, rising more steeply at the back. It is a perfect amphitheatre. Many thousands of people can sit all round this shore and hear clearly a man speaking in a boat in the middle of the bay.[1]

Peter's boat was ready. Jesus climbed over the gunwale. Peter and John at the oars, with the sail up to catch the breeze, soon gained the centre of this little bay. There they dropped their stone anchor. The crowds came pouring down the paths through the cornfields on the slopes above the lake.

Jesus began to speak. The very boys on the shore itself, with their toes in the cool water, kept still as he told them story after story. All were about the common things of

[1] The experiment has been made several times recently, notably by Dr. Christie, who has lived for many years at Tiberias. The bay is shown in the photograph (Pl. XVIII), taken by the author from the higher part of its eastern shore.

everyday life. The first of the stories was about what happened on the very fields behind the crowd; the cornfields that Jesus could see over the heads of the people and in which he, a few weeks earlier, had walked on the Sabbath with his disciples.

'Listen,' said Jesus; 'the sower goes out to sow. As he sows, some of the seed falls by the path. The birds come and peck it up. Some falls on the rocky ground. There it finds but little earth. It shoots up quickly, because it has no depth of soil; but when the sun is high in the sky, the plant is scorched and through having no root it withers away. Again, some seed falls among the thorns; the thorns grow and stifle it, so that it does not yield any crop.'

Every boy on the beach would grasp this at once. For the thorny little plants that threaten the crop are legion in Palestine. In the cornfields around Capernaum among those that grow up swiftly and choke the growing corn are a tall pink flowering thistle, with strong, sharp spines,[1] a bright orange-flowered poisonous thistle,[2] a small yellow-flowered thistle,[3] and another with prickles that sting like a wasp.[4]

'But', Jesus concluded, 'some of the seed falls upon good ground and yields a crop; it grows up and increases and gives thirty, or sixty, or a hundredfold.'

'Listen', he added, 'every one who has ears to listen with.' By this he meant, of course, 'Listen, every one who in his mind and spirit has the will and the power to take in to his heart what I say.'

Later on, his disciples wanted to ask what the parable meant. Meanwhile, Jesus went on with teaching the people.

'How are we to give a picture of the Kingdom of God? By what figure of speech shall we explain it? It is', he said, 'like a mustard-seed[4] which a man took and sowed in his own

[1] *Notobasis syriaca.* [2] *Scolymus maculatus.*
[3] *Carthemus oxyacantha.*
[4] *Sinapis nigra*: one of the Cruciferae, not the yellow mustard ordinarily used for the table.

garden. This is the smallest of seeds; yet, when sown, it springs up and becomes larger than all the other herbs, and throws out wide branches so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its shelter.'

The listeners knew that the seed of which Jesus spoke is so small that the Jews talked of it proverbially, saying, 'As small as a mustard-seed.' It is very pungent and penetrating when crushed—making seasoning for food and being good for healing the skin. Around the Sea of Galilee, and in the Jordan valley, especially when cultivated in a garden, as in Jesus' parable, it grows—an annual—to eight or even ten feet high, towering above smaller herbs such as mint. Goldfinches and linnets come in flocks to perch on its branches and eat the seeds. It is so wonderfully productive that a plant, after beautifying the garden with its rich yellow blossoms, will, in one year, produce as many as ten thousand black seeds. So it stood in Jesus' talk as a symbol of the Kingdom of God in its wonderful power of growth.

Another story he told them about sowing and reaping.

'The Kingdom of Heaven', he said, 'is like a man who has sown good seed in his field. During the night, however, his enemy comes, and over the first seed he sows darnel among the wheat and goes away.'

This would at once go home to every one. They knew that the tares, or Bearded Darnel,[1] 'zawan', as the Arabs call it, is a poisonous grass weed which causes no end of trouble. It is indeed, the only one of the grass family that is poisonous. If you eat darnel it produces horrible sickness and convulsions and may even end in death. Some of the boys listening that day had spent many hours in the hot sun in the week just before harvest going through the wheat at the tiresome work of weeding the fields by hand to get out the darnel. It has a broad leaf like wheat; so these tares cannot be distinguished from the true wheat until the ear comes. It is,

[1] *Lolium temulentum.* The Arab name 'zawan' means 'nausea' because the seed of the tares, if eaten, causes vomiting.

therefore, useless to try to weed it out before the time of harvest. So the boys understood well the reason for the rest of Jesus' story, which ran as follows:

'When, however, the blade grows up and the ear begins to form, then the darnel shows itself also. So the farmer's men come to him and ask him, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed on your land? Where, then, does this darnel come from?"

'The farmer answers, "Some enemy has done this".'

'Would you then like us to go and pull them up?' ask the labourers.

' "No," replies the farmer, "for then (seeing that the ear is not yet fully formed) you might make a mistake and pull up the wheat with the weeds. Let them grow up side by side till the harvest. At harvest time I will give orders to the reapers, "Collect the darnel first, and make it up into bundles to burn; but bring all the wheat into my barn." '

This picture, which showed how like evil may be to good in looks until its actual fruit begins to form, went to the heart and stayed in the memory of Jesus' hearers. The women, for instance, knew how, even when all the weeding has been done, it is still necessary to sift the grain with a sieve so adjusted that the darnel seed, which is smaller, goes through and the good seed stays in the sieve. Otherwise the bread that they bake would be poisoned.

Jesus gave one other picture that came out of his own boyhood recollections of what his mother did. Indeed, it was an everyday happening of every home, so that each boy and man in the crowd could grasp the truth of what he said.

'The Kingdom of Heaven', he said, 'is like the yeast that a woman takes and kneads into a bushel of flour, for it to work there until the whole dough has risen.'

He now told the people that it was time for them to go to their homes. The disciples turned the bows of the boat toward Capernaum.

Peter, John and James and the others came to him when they were home again, as he sat resting.

'Explain to us,' they said, 'the parable of the darnel sown in the field.'

'The sower of the good seed', he answered, 'is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed, the sons of the Kingdom; the darnel, the sons of the evil one. The enemy who sows the darnel is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age; the reapers are angels, messengers of God.'

The disciples were equally perplexed about the story of the sower of the seed in the field.

'What the sower sows', Jesus explained, 'is the word (or the message). Those who are like the footpath when the seed is sown there are those to whom, as soon as they hear the word, Satan comes at once and carries it off. In the same way those who receive the seed on the rocky places are those who accept it enthusiastically, but they have no root in them; they only last for a time. When suffering comes or persecution they are immediately overthrown. Others who receive the seed among the thorns are those who have heard the Message, but the care of the world and the enjoyment of being well-off and the pursuit of other passions comes in and chokes the Message so that it becomes unfruitful. Those, on the other hand, who were sown on good soil are the people who are ready to listen to the Message and with an honest and good heart take it in and bear fruit, thirty, or sixty, or a hundredfold.'

Jesus was now very tired. To teach thousands of people in the open air such immortal truth as this, in forms of such lovely simplicity, called out his strength. He must go away to get quiet in the company of his Father.

'Let us cross to the other side,' he said.

Peter's boat lay ready on the beach.

CHAPTER XXXIV

STORM

IT was now evening. Jesus went down with Peter and Andrew into the boat. James and John and some of the others followed in their boat. Peter's wife, seeing how tired the Master was, gave Simon a cushion which he put in the stern of the boat.

With sail hoisted the boat began to glide across the north end of the lake from the west to the eastern side. Jesus lay down in the stern of the boat with his head on the cushion. In a few minutes he was fast asleep.

The cold air from the snows of Mount Hermon is often drawn down the Jordan valley at sunset, to fill the vacuum created on the surface of the water by the warm air that rises from that deep trough. With astounding swiftness, great waves are raging down the lake. The storm may, indeed, be so narrow that one side of the lake is lashed with waves and the other is almost calm. Often these storms will cease as abruptly as they begin.

That very evening this occurred. When the two boats were well out to sea, just such a tempest burst from the north on the Lake of Galilee.[1] The boat running east was caught on the port side. The only land near by was the north shore; but, of course, it was impossible to gain it in the teeth of the storm. The waves broke over the gunwale. The boat began to fill. Jesus slept on. Panic-stricken, the disciples caught his arm and woke him.

'Rabbi,' they shouted above the roaring wind, 'don't you care that we drown?'

Jesus roused himself.

[1] The author saw such a storm begin and rage with such fury that waves more than thirty feet high broke over the towers on the shore at Tiberias. The photographs here reproduced (Pl. XIX) show the contrast between the storm and the scene at dawn on the following morning.

'*The tempest burst with full force on the Lake.*'
An evening storm on the Lake of Galilee.

The same scene the next morning.

to shackle him. But he had, with the fearful strength of a daemoniac, smashed his chains into fragments on the boulders and sawn asunder the ropes on rocks, till he was free again. He was a townsman of Gergesa. Since his madness came on him, however, he never slept within four walls, but cowered like a hunted wild beast in the eerie shelter of the loathsome tombs, hewn like caves in the rocky side of the mountain.

Jesus' radiant spirit, as happened again and again, shone with conquering power in face of the spirits of evil that held the daemoniac in their grip. The wild man came rushing towards him and threw himself on the ground worshipping him.

'Foul spirit,' Jesus said sternly, 'come out of the man.'

'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of God Most High?' he shrieked. 'In God's name I implore you not to torment me.'

'What is your name?' Jesus asked.

'Legion!' replied the daemoniac, to whose fevered mind the multitude of soldiers in the Roman camp gave a name for the turmoil of spirits in himself. 'Legion, for there are a host of us.'

The swine, seized by sudden mass frenzy or caught with panic induced by his wild, maniacal shrieks, dashed wildly down the steep into the sea. The man stood there sane and happy.

A spare tunic was given to him by one of the disciples and the man put it on. Jesus sat on a boulder. The man, full of joy, sat at his feet. The swineherds rushed into the city of Gergesa with the news. They were sure Jesus was the cause of the drowning of their herd of swine. A crowd came hurrying out, including the owners of the swine. They found the man clothed and in his right mind sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to him.

The townsfolk, filled with terror at the power of Jesus, and the owners of the swine, more deeply moved by the loss

of their beasts—which they put down to Jesus—than by the glorious recovery of their fellow citizen, begged him to go away from their territory. Jesus went down the slope again toward the boat. The man followed him.

'Let me come with you,' he pleaded with Jesus. 'Let me stay with you always.'

'No,' replied the Master. 'Go to your home. Tell the folk there how great things God has done for you.'

So, as Jesus got into the boat and Simon pushed off from the beach and turned the bow westward, the man went toward Gergesa and told the story throughout the city of the great things Jesus had done for him.

CHAPTER XXXV

REJECTED AT HOME

JESUS had sailed from Capernaum at the north-west corner of the lake across to this eastern shore by Gergesa in search of quiet. He had found, however, little enough rest. The disciples, terrified by the storm, had rudely awakened him from his short sleep in the boat. Healing the wild man had called on the deepest resources of his power. The inhospitable and hard-minded citizens of Gergesa now drove him away from their coast.

The boat was carrying him across the north end of the lake back toward the clamorous crowds near Capernaum. If the Gergesenes had been terror-struck at Jesus' power and fearful of what he would do if they let him stay in their neighbourhood, the Galileans, altogether to the contrary, were on the tiptoe of impatience to see him again. No sooner did they recognize in the distance the trim of Peter's sail and the lines of his boat than the word flew from group to group that Jesus was on his way back.

Even as the keel ground into the shingle, the vast multitude engulfed him. Jesus landed, but stayed close by the water. It was quite impossible to meet all the demands for healing that these thousands made. A call now came, however, that he could not refuse.

A man ran forward and fell down on his knees at Jesus' feet. He was a well-known leader among the Jews there. Indeed, it was he who controlled the synagogue worship, deciding at the Sabbath services whom to call upon to speak or to read the Law and the Prophets from the Sacred Scrolls. His name was Jairus.

'My little daughter,' cried Jairus, 'is very ill; she is at the point of death. Come, I beseech you, come! Lay your hands on her. Then she will be well. Come, so that she may live.'

A child's need, the agony of a distracted father, stirred Jesus. To Jairus' intense joy, he agreed to come with him. As they went along, the multitude swirled around them. So pressed were Jesus and his small group of disciples that the writer says they were 'ground as between millstones'. Suddenly Jesus stopped and looked round.

'Who touched my clothes?' he asked.

His disciples were naturally astounded at such a question.

'Look,' blurted out Peter roughly, as though his Master had lost his senses, 'you see the multitude thronging you, and you say, "Who touched me?" '

Jesus ignored the rude interjection. His keen eyes searched the faces round about him. For a hand *had* touched him; a hand that ached for help, for healing; a hand that believed that even to touch the fringe of his robe would heal; a hand whose faith had drawn the power from him, the power to heal. Then his eyes found the face of a woman whose whole soul looked at him through her eyes. She staggered forward trembling and in great fear. Falling at his feet, she told him her story. For twelve long fearful years she had endured an agonizing and weakening loss of blood. Physicians without number had attended her. She had spent every denarius that she had on them; and at the end of it all she was worse rather than better. She had heard of the wonderful healing that Jesus did. She had said to herself, 'If I can only touch his garment, I shall be healed.' So she had threaded her way through the crowd inch by inch till, getting quite close to him, she took her courage in both hands and, reaching out, touched his robe. Instantaneously, she knew that she was healed. And he knew that power—vital, radiating force—had gone from him to her.

'Courage, my daughter,' he said to her when her story was done. 'Your faith has made you whole.'

As he was saying this to her, others came pressing their way through the crowd. They were servants from the house of Jairus.

'Your daughter is dead,' they panted. 'Why trouble the Master any further?'

Jesus overheard this. Turning from the healed woman to Jairus, he said:

'Do not be afraid; only believe. She shall be made well.'

So they pressed on through the crowd until they reached the gate of the courtyard of Jairus' house. As they went in they heard the playing of the flutes of mourning; the wailing of the women; the men beating their breasts and groaning.

'Off with you,' cried Jesus; 'be off with you. Why do you make this din and weep? The child is not dead. She is asleep.'

They burst into a cackle of scornful laughter.

'Put them out,' said Jesus.

This he did, not in anger, but because to do a great deed of healing he needed above everything the faith of people—as he was always telling them.

So Jairus ordered the crowd out. Soon only Jesus, Jairus and his wife, and the faithful three—Peter, John, and James—were left. They went into the room where the girl lay stretched out on her mat bed all white and still. She was only twelve years old. Jesus stooped over her.

'My child,'[1] he said gently, 'arise.'

At once her eyes opened. She looked up and smiled, and, standing on her feet, ran to her parents. Jairus and his wife were lost in unspeakable amazement. It was Jesus who thought of the real need of the girl and of giving the parents some outlet for expressing their joy.

'Give her something to eat,' he said.

The fame of this deed ran swiftly over the land. Jesus had just gone across the lake eastward to escape the vast multitude. Now he turned in the other direction. He started out, with tunic girt and sandals tightened, to climb with his group of disciples the fifteen-mile walk to the city

[1] 'Talitha'—the word that he spoke—is an Aramaic word meaning 'little lamb', and was used as a term of endearment for children.

in the hills that had been his home for nearly thirty years. They set their faces toward Nazareth. He had not talked with his fellow townsmen there since that great day, now months ago, when he had in the Jordan felt the power from above come into him and heard the Voice that said to him: 'Thou art my Son, my beloved.'

First they went along the lake-side, nearly to Magdala, and then through the Gennesaret olive groves and fig orchards up the ravine of the Way of the Sea. They then walked across through the high corn-lands of the Galilee highlands and over the ridge into Nazareth.

Sabbath came. Jesus walked down the street to the Meeting-House. The leaders of the synagogue, having heard of the wonderful things that he said and did by the lake-side, seeing their fellow townsman back again, were eager to hear him. So they at once asked him to read the lesson for the day and to speak to them. When the time came he stood up and went to the reading-desk. The Keeper of the Books brought the Scroll to Jesus.

He unrolled it at the place for the reading for the day. The strong, clear voice of Jesus rang out as he read the thrilling, immortal proclamation:

'The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor;
He has sent me to declare freedom to the prisoners
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set free the oppressed,
To declare the Lord's year of favour.'

The voice ceased. There was silence. Jesus returned the Scroll to the Keeper of the Books. Then he sat down. The eyes of all were fixed intensely on him—as Peter noted at the time and told the world later. What would he say in explaining Isaiah's Declaration of the New Day? He astounded them with an unbelievable claim.

'To-day,' he said, 'to-day, this writing has come true in your hearing.'

He went on to speak words that burned with a supreme certainty. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me'—the Spirit of God had come down upon him in the River Jordan when he knew in a more wonderful way than ever that God was Father and he was Son and They were One.

'Thou art my beloved Son
In whom I am well pleased.'

They were thunderstruck. Peter used the strongest word that he could find to describe their bewilderment and amazement.[1]

Scoffing and wondering whispers blended as one bearded ancient turned his sceptical, cynical old eyes on the wrinkled face of another and said:

'Is not this Joseph's son? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?'

Here he was claiming that he himself was the power of God ready to give Good News to the poor, to set imprisoned lives free, to open blinded eyes, to break the shackles of oppressed people. Their carpenter-neighbour was claiming that he fulfilled the prophet's world-transforming, revolutionary programme. If some one had come down from the skies with thunder and lightning; or had galloped into Nazareth as a Prince at the head of armies in the armour of David, they might have believed what he said. But that God should be in one so poor, so simple, one who had kept a roof over his mother's head and earned food for his brothers and sisters by making common wooden things for the service of his neighbours with the labour of his own hands—that was too absurd.

'Whence has he got all these things? What is the wisdom that has been given to him? What are these powerful things done by his hands?'

Jesus caught the murmurings, the questionings. The harsh, critical atmosphere chilled his spirit.

[1] Mark vi. 2. The Greek is very strong.

'I tell you,' he said, 'no prophet is acceptable in his own country. Indeed there were many widows in the land when Elijah lived, and the famine came; but he was sent only to a widow at Zarephta, in the land of Sidon. There were many lepers in the days of Elisha, the prophet; but only Naaman, the Syrian, was cleansed.'

This was infuriating. Jesus had deliberately chosen as examples of those to whom God chose to send his prophets two heathen aliens—despised foreigners. The widow who lived in pagan Phoenicia, a Sidonese. An army officer of the hated northern foe in Syria. God has to send his prophets to foreigners—'lesser breeds without the Law'—before the people will listen. In his native land or his home town a prophet is rejected. This maddened the Nazarenes. The synagogue buzzed like a nest of angry hornets.

'Arrogant, impertinent upstart,' they muttered. 'Away with him!'

So they leapt to their feet and, grasping his shoulders and his robe, pushed and dragged him out of the synagogue along the street up the hill to the sharp, precipitous place that loomed above the gorge. They meant to hurl him headlong over the edge for his blasphemy. They did not do it.

Why? Did they begin to feel that they were making fools of themselves? Did they think fearfully of the Roman soldiers in the garrison over the hill? Was there not, rather, that calm, fearless authority; that something godlike in his frank, penetrating eyes; that awe which came on men who faced his strong, quiet power; that echo of God's voice in his words and in the words that he had read which made them wonder whether, after all, he might be sent by God. And if he were right, they were disastrously, horribly wrong.

So he went out of their midst over the hills again, never to come back. He was outcast from the town that he had lived in from the days when he could scarcely walk. He

and his Good News were rejected and derided by his own folk.

He never went into its streets again. He set his face toward the Sea of Galilee with the fishermen who had spent their young lives trying their luck in its waters. They, at least, would come with him on the great adventure: risk their lives on deeper, wider waters.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HARVESTERS

WHEN they got back to Capernaum, the people pressed round Jesus again like bees in swarm. As he stood there by the lake-side with Simon and Andrew, James and John and the others of the twelve, the crowds came hurrying from every side.

Many sick persons hobbled or were carried to him to be healed. Many wanted healing. But the question that held youth all over the land was this:

'Has the great leader at last come to free us and save the people?'

Pontius Pilate governed the land with his underlings, Herod Antipas, in Galilee, ruling them with bitter, hard authority, and Philip, north-east of them. And behind these the people felt the far but awful hand of the Emperor Tiberius at Rome. Was Jesus the new King that would bring in the Reign of God? Here, with his dark, burning eyes fixed eagerly on Jesus, was a young Galilean zealot. A vehement nationalist, he wanted Jesus to be a fighting Prince to conquer the Romans with the power of God. A quieter man, dressed in creamy-white robes, with more thoughtful eyes, but with as keen a glint of enthusiasm in their depths and an even stronger line of determination in his jaw, stood near by. He was an Essene. He wanted a spiritual Kingdom of God. Jesus' brother James was—it seems probable—an Essene; and John the Baptist held and practised many of their teachings.

So the faces of these vast crowds that swirled around him wrung Jesus' heart. He went up and down the land, and taught his Good News in scores of synagogues, not only on the Sabbath, but at the Monday and Thursday prayers. He healed all kinds of disease. Everywhere the people crowded around him. If only, Jesus felt, this people, this marvellous

Jewish nation, accepted the Good News of the Kingdom of God, they could carry it to the whole world.

No one person, however, could reach the whole nation. How were all to hear? Jesus put the problem to his men.

'The harvest truly,' he said, with a gesture to the crowd, 'is rich—but the labourers are few. How are we to get the harvest in? Pray to the Owner of the Harvest to send out workers into his field,' Jesus went on, answering his own question.

Then he made a decision that was one of the greatest in his life. Let his men themselves, answering this prayer, go into the field. That day, for the first time he called them, not disciples (or learners) but 'apostoloi' or messengers. From being students or pupils they became teachers and doctors.

'You have received without payment; now go and give without payment,' said Jesus, to mark the sharp difference in the role that they were now to play. So he thrust them out into the harvest; made his Twelve Men under-shepherds. At last they were to become what he had said he could make them, 'Fishers of men'.

Jesus sent them out in couples, because men work best when a comrade is near. Together men can help each other to climb up dangerous places, enjoy comradeship, cheer each other when things go wrong, plan together new advances.

He sent, then, two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, together down one path; Zebedee's two sons, James and John, along another; Philip of Bethsaida walked with Nathanael Bar-Talmai; Thomas accompanied the tax-gatherer Matthew; and James Bar-Alphaeus went with Lebbaeus Thaddeus. There was insight in sending the fiery Galilean patriotic Zealot, Simon, out in the company of the Judaean, Judas Iscariot.

Jesus saw the gathering menace of the hate of the Pharisee and Herod's officers ready to fling him in prison when the right moment came. If the harvest was to be reaped before

this storm broke; if the sheep were to be brought into the one flock before the shepherd was cut down, speed was essential. So Jesus sent his men off, north, south, east, and west, as stripped for a race.

'Do not go among the pagans,' said Jesus, 'but concentrate upon the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'[1]

Why go only to Jews on this journey? First, the need for speed demanded concentration. Nor were the Twelve yet prepared for giving the Message to Greeks and other Gentiles. Then God had been training the Jews through the centuries in preparation for spreading the Good News. Already the Jews had a purer, truer knowledge of the one God who created the universe than had any other people. They were dispersed among the nations of the whole known world. If, then, they accepted Jesus' Good News of the Kingdom, they were, above all peoples in the world, the best fitted to carry it to all nations.

As he chose the Twelve to go to the Jews, so Jesus wished the Jews to go to the world. He gave them the greatest opportunity that has ever come to any people, to carry to the whole human race the truth—the truth about the Spirit that made the Universe, the truth about how to live and to live eternally in the love of the Father who made all things.

'Go,' Jesus said to his apostles, 'tell the people that the Kingdom is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out daemons. Give without payment as you have received without paying. Do not take any gold nor even silver or copper in your pocket. No food-wallet, no change of linen, no shoes; the labourer deserves his keep.'

Peter says that they were told to carry a staff and nothing else; Matthew and Luke that they should not even take that. Surely Peter was right. The staff was the one thing that would help to sustain speed.

[1] This instruction is only given in St. Matthew. It is absent from the narratives of St. Mark and St. Luke.

'Whatever town or village you enter,' Jesus pursued, 'ask for some good man. Make his house your home until you leave the place. When you go into the house, say: "Peace be upon you." If the house deserves it, your peace will rest on it; if not, the peace will come back to you. Whoever refuses to take you in or to listen to your Message, as you leave, shake off the very dust from your feet. It will, I tell you, be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.

'I am sending you, remember, like sheep among wolves; prove yourselves as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard. Men will deliver you up, to drag you forcibly before the Sanhedrins. They will flog you in their synagogues. You will even be put on trial before Governors and Kings for my sake. When, however, they have delivered you up, do not worry how you are going to speak or what you shall say. For at that time it will be given you what to say; for it is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.'

These were Jesus' marching-instructions to his men.

'Do not be afraid,' he said, 'of those who kill the body, but who cannot kill the soul. Fear, rather, him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. The very hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear not, then, you are worth much more than sparrows.

'Every one who disowns me before men, I shall disown him before my Father in Heaven. Do not suppose that I came to bring peace to the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but to introduce a sword; indeed (and he quoted Micah) to set a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. and a man's own family will be his foes. Any one who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and any one who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy

of me; and any one who does not take up his cross and follow where I lead is not worthy of me.

'To save your life is to lose it
And to lose your life for my sake is to save it.
Whoever receives you, receives me.
And whoever receives me, receives him who sent me.
Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink because he is a disciple,
I tell you he will not lose his reward.'

So the Apostles went their ways into this new and great adventure of using the wonderful power that came to them through Jesus to heal men and to open their eyes to the truth. Jesus stood watching them as they started out two by two on their several adventures. He longed greatly that they should do with faith and high courage the work to which he had set them. And so they did. He himself turned and went his own way into one after another of the neighbouring towns.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LIGHTNING

WHILE Jesus' disciples were away from him and he was healing and teaching in these towns at the north end of the great Jordan rift, John the Baptist paced up and down the battlements of the castle of Machaerus [1] like a caged lion. From those walls high up on the grim crags above the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, his eyes strained eagerly northward along the long ribbon of the Jordan, where his stormy message had shaken the lives of thousands and where Jesus had come to him to be baptized. This Jesus—John's followers told him—had, when the Baptist was thrown into prison, boldly taken up the message of the Kingdom. Jesus, John believed, was the one whom God was to send.

John, however, now began to have his doubts. Eating his heart out in loneliness in prison, John wondered whether Jesus was really doing the work for which John had been the forerunner. Was Jesus really laying the axe at the root of the tree? So John paced up and down in prison, a prey to dark fears.

Some of John's followers were allowed by Herod to come into the castle to see their imprisoned leader. Eagerly John asked for news, especially of Jesus. He heard that Jesus was telling the folk not to resist evil, but to love their enemies; that the Kingdom of God is like seed that sprouts quietly from the ground; or like leaven that slowly works in the dough; that he called a tax-gatherer as a disciple; that he attended a great banquet given in his honour by this tax-gatherer, with numbers of other accursed *publicani* present; and that his disciples did not fast as John's did. This was strangely disquieting news to the ascetic prophet who had lived on wild honey and hard desert fare, eating sparse food among

[1] See Chapter XXII.

rocks and thorn bushes, and whose fiery voice had cried aloud of the wrath to come.

At last John made up his mind to get at the truth by a direct question to Jesus himself.

'Go to Jesus,' he said, to two of his disciples, 'go and ask him this question—"Are you the One who should come, or must we look for another?" '

When these two men had tramped from Machaerus Castle up the valley of the Jordan toward the north end of the Lake of Galilee, they came to Magdala, a village on the north-west shore of the lake, by the Plain of Gennesaret, within a few miles of Capernaum. The two disciples of John found Jesus, surrounded by a great multitude. Many were sick, and he healed them. The two disciples of John approached Jesus.

'John the Baptist', they said, 'has told us to come to you and to ask you: "Are you he that should come, or do we look for another?" '

Jesus did not use words of his own to answer John. He quoted—as a true picture of what they had seen during that very hour—the immortal vision of the great prophet Isaiah, that had brought down fury on Jesus' head when in Nazareth he claimed to be its fulfilment.

'Go back,' said Jesus, 'and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And happy is he who does not stumble and fall because of my claims.'

So John's men turned and started again down the valley to tell their master that they had seen the power of God conquering disease and heard God's truth taught to simple people. Jesus swung round on the multitude and spoke in defence of John.

'What did you go out into the desert to see?' he asked. 'A reed like these on the lake-side, that sway before the breeze?' (In other words a bowing time-server, cringing before the whims of a Roman officer or bowing before the

gusts of mob-passion.) 'A man dressed in soft raiment? The gorgeously dressed, I tell you, and luxurious folk live in kings' palaces. Come, now, what did you go out to see?'

'A prophet,' replied some voice from the crowd.

'"A prophet," you say. Yes, and much more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written:

> '"Behold I send my messenger before your face
> To prepare the way for you."

'I tell you truly, among the sons of women, none has arisen greater than John the Baptist. Yet he that is little in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.'

The Pharisees shook their heads; for they would have nothing to do with John, nor would they hear any good thing said in his favour. Yet these same Pharisees were grumbling at Jesus because he, unlike John, did not order his disciples to fast, and himself went to banquets with pagans and sinful people. Nothing was right for the Pharisees. Jesus turned on them with an illustration that cut them to the quick.

'To what shall I compare the men of this generation?' he asked. 'What are they like? They are,' he went on, 'like boys and girls sitting in the market-place calling out to others who refuse to play with them either at "weddings" or "funerals":

> '"We have played the flute to you
> And you have not danced.
> We have sung a funeral dirge
> And you have not beat your breasts as mourners."

'For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say "He is daemon-possessed!" The Son of Man has come eating and drinking and you say—"Look, there is a man who is fond of food and a drunkard, a friend, too, of tax-gatherers and of notorious sinners." None the less, wisdom is vindicated by her own children.'

At this time a Pharisee of Magdala named Simon asked Jesus to come to his home to dinner. He wanted to watch Jesus' actions. Jesus, when pressed, accepted the invitation.

Going to the man's house, he went in. Simon the Pharisee, feeling evidently that here was just a wandering Rabbi of peasant birth, neglected the ordinary courtesies of an Eastern host. No servant washed the dust of the road off Jesus' feet; nor did his host greet him with the kiss of hospitality. So Jesus, unbuckling his own sandals and taking them off, reclined on a couch by the table. Even then Simon did not command any one of his servants to the customary courtesy of anointing the head of the guest with perfumed oil.

The dining-hall was open to the square courtyard into which people could enter from the outer world. As Jesus and Simon and the others sat there talking and eating, a figure glided in from the street; a woman wrapped in her long robe. Her hair hung loose around her uncovered head and face. She came quietly behind Jesus' couch and stood at his feet. For guests always reclined on a couch, with their unshod feet outward from the table. In the woman's hand was a lovely carved flask of precious alabaster filled with a costly perfume. She was a woman who was living a sinful life; but Jesus' spirit, as she had listened to him and watched him, gave her—how and when we do not know—such a vision of purity and of a love that saw her as a child of God, that her heart was melted. She stood there with the tears running down her cheeks. The tears dropped on his dusty feet. The woman of Magdala stooped and wiped his feet with the hair of her head. With the tears running down her face she kissed his feet again and again. Then, opening the flask with perfume, she poured it out upon his feet.

Simon the Pharisee looked askance. He was scandalized at the scene.

'This man,' he muttered to himself with a sneer, 'if he were really a prophet, would know what sort of person this woman is who is touching him. He would know that she is a sinful woman.'

Jesus saw the sneer and read the thought.

'Simon,' he said, 'I have a word to say to you.'

'Say on, Rabbi,' replied Simon curtly.

'There were', continued Jesus calmly, 'two men in debt to a money-lender. One of the debtors owed him five hundred shillings, the other fifty. Neither of them could pay a penny. So he freely forgave them both. Tell me, which of them will love him most.'

'I suppose', replied Simon loftily, 'the man to whom he forgave most.'

'You have judged rightly,' said Jesus. Then, with startling dramatic swiftness, he drove home the lesson of courtesy, love, and forgiveness to self-satisfied Simon. He turned his face from Simon to the woman, and, pointing to her, he said: 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. But you gave me no water for my feet; while she has washed my feet with her tears and then wiped away the tears with her hair. You gave me no kiss; yet ever since she came in she has continued pressing kisses on my feet. You never anointed my head with oil; yet she has anointed my feet with perfume.

'For that reason, I tell you, many as her sins are, they are forgiven—because she has loved much; whereas'—and he turned his eyes full on Simon—'he who is forgiven little, has but little love.'

Turning again to the Magdalene woman, he said to her—'Your sins are forgiven.'

Some of the guests muttered to one another, scoffing and shocked—'Who is this to forgive even sins?'

Jesus, ignoring them, said to the woman—'Your faith has saved you.' Then he gave her a courteous salutation of farewell. 'Go in peace.'

So Mary of Magdala, for surely it was she, went out; and all the rest of her days were given, as we shall see, to serving Jesus.[1]

John's disciples had, meanwhile, trudged back through the heats of the Jordan valley to Machaerus Castle. Did John

[1] This story of an incident that came when the twelve apostles were away on their journey is told us by Luke only, the writer who got so much of his knowledge from the women-folk who had been in Jesus' company.

ever hear the message that they brought from Jesus? We may well doubt it. For, while Mary of Magdala poured out her love for Jesus, another woman down there by the Dead Sea, smouldering with baffled anger and insulted pride, was plotting to slay John the Baptist.

Herodias, Herod Antipas' wife, was furious that John the Baptist had dared to say outright that her marriage to Herod was a vile act. Nursing her hate and waiting her chance of vengeance, again and again she asked her husband to kill John. But Herod, though a gross tyrant, was, as such men almost always are, afraid of offending the unseen powers of the spirit-world. He knew that John was an upright and a good man, a man of holy life. He feared to bring the vengeance of spirits on himself if he killed John. Indeed, Herod called John before him again and again to speak to him; and each time John talked with him Herod's conscience was shaken and torn. It troubled him to hear John's stern, strong voice telling him the everlasting truth that is deeper than all change and stronger than all kings. Yet Herod was thrilled, too, with a strange, troubling joy, as he heard John's stirring vision of the Kingdom.

One day, however, just at this time, Herod gave a great banquet. The nobles of his court were there, the generals of his battalions, and his judges, with the leading folk of Galilee. Slaves carried wine round among the guests. Herod drank long and deep. Laughter and excited talk rose on the air. Herodias' own daughter came in and danced so beautifully and with such enthralling grace that all the guests cried out and applauded. Herod, carried beyond himself by the dancing and the wine he had drunk, cried out with a great oath—

'Ask me anything that you please. I will give it to you.'

And, as the guests roared their applause, Herod swore: 'Yes, whatever you ask me I will give you, up to a half of my kingdom.'

The girl ran to her mother.

'What shall I ask for?' she said.

Instantly Herodias, her face flushed with the joy of bloody revenge, hissed—

'The head of John the Baptist—go quickly and ask.'

The girl hurried swiftly in. The lightning stroke fell.

'My desire is', she said, 'that you will give me, here and now, on a dish, the head of John the Baptist.'

The half-drunken king was suddenly sobered.

He was trapped. To kill John the Baptist, that was fearful. But to break his oath: to be the laughing-stock of all the nobility and learning of his land, jeered at throughout his army, because he would not keep his sworn word—that was impossible. So he called a soldier of the guard, rapped out the hideous order, the man hurried away through the corridors of the castle to the prison cells, sword in hand. In a few moments the tragic and loathsome act was done. The heroic head lay on a silver dish. The officer carried it to the girl. She carried it to her mother. John's disciples, heart-broken, came and carried away the body and laid it reverently in a tomb.

Then a fearful shock struck Herod. His spies came down to him from the Lake of Galilee and said, 'A prophet is there, he is healing diseases, casting out devils, and calling on men everywhere—"Repent, repent for the Kingdom is here." '

Herod, cringing and shivering, muttered—'It is John; it is John the Baptist. He whom I beheaded is risen.'

Then with a revulsion of bravado Herod thought he would do with Jesus as he had done with John. He would take him prisoner, bring him down and lock him in his castle so that he himself might see and hear Jesus and yet keep him from carrying on his work of what Herod feared above all things—a new revolution for a new Kingdom.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

'MAKE HIM KING'

HEROD ANTIPAS paced up and down nervously. His court was buzzing with rumours about Jesus. Luke, who some years later met both Herod's foster-brother Manaen at Antioch in Syria and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's Chancellor at Jerusalem, was thus in close touch with what happened. He tells us how some folk declared to Herod Antipas that John the Baptist had risen, and others were certain that Elijah had at last made his long prophesied return; while a further group vowed that this or that prophet of the old days had come to life again. Herod was, Luke reports, 'quite at a loss'.

'John I have beheaded,' Antipas cried in bewilderment, as the messengers came to him with stories about Jesus, 'but who is this about whom I hear such tales?'

Why should Herod, safe in his Castle of Tiberias, or his Fortress of Machaerus, care what a wandering teacher said to unlearned fishermen and farmers and to their sons and daughters? The fact is that he was getting alarmed for his rule. His spies told him how the people everywhere in Galilee were talking of Jesus as the coming King. Crowds from every town and village in Herod's dominion almost trampled on each other to get near Jesus and to hear his talk to them about this new 'Kingdom'. What Kingdom? Herod was king, and king he meant to remain. He loved power; to keep it he would creep like a fox and fight like a hyena.

Herod had been anxious enough about John the Baptist's bugle-call, 'the Kingdon of Heaven is at hand'. He threw John into prison (Josephus says) because he 'dreaded his great persuasive power with men, for fear it would lead to a rebellion of some kind, for the folk seemed ready to do anything that he said.'[1] How much greater was his alarm to hear

[1] *Antiquities*, xviii. 5, 2.

that Jesus had sent off twelve trained men all over his territory. And with what a message? To go down every camel-road and sheep-track into the towns and villages calling men into a new Kingdom. What Kingdom? The question rang and rang in Herod's head like a maddening bell.

Herod, therefore, tried to get at Jesus. He was not yet ready to lay violent hands on him, for he did not want to bring a furious attack of patriotic Galileans upon himself. And he was so superstitious that he dreaded raising the awful powers of the Unseen against himself. If only he could get conclusive evidence that Jesus was plotting against the power of the Roman Empire and could capture him, then he would win credit for himself with Procurator Pilate and even with the Emperor at Rome.

Jesus must for the time put himself out of Herod's way. He was ready to meet death when the time came; and to meet it with his head up, unafraid, saying 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome'. But he must not die as John did, in an out of the way corner at the hands of a local tyrant. The final crisis must be fought out at the heart of the nation's life. It must come, too, when the nation was gathered together from all over the world—at the Feast. It must be, then, in the Holy City itself and at Passover. So it was necessary now to go away from the crowds and from Herod's territory and teach his men how to carry the Good News to the world.

The Twelve now came back from every side to Jesus, who was in Capernaum. They were delighted with their adventures and at the way the people had listened to the Message of the Kingdom; of how they had power to heal and teach and move the multitudes.

The Twelve were excited—and exhausted. Jesus, too, was eager to hear how they had fared and how the Good News had been received. But the crowds clamouring for healing made it impossible.

'Come with me apart into a quiet place,' said Jesus to them, 'and rest awhile.'

'Once east of the upper Jordan, Jesus was beyond reach of Herod's arm.'

The Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob across the upper Jordan. This side was Herod Antipas' territory; the other that of Philip his half-brother.

Jesus and the Twelve walked down to the beach along to where Peter's smack lay swinging at anchor. Climbing in, they hoisted sail and swung her bows eastward. Skirting the north shore, they crossed the mouth of the Upper Jordan to the north-east corner of the lake. Once east of the Upper Jordan, Jesus was beyond the reach of Herod's arm. For he and his men were then in the territory governed by Herod's brother Philip. There was nothing to fear from him. He was a ruler very different from Herod. His subjects were largely non-Jews. So he had little fear of rebellion. Philip's rule, therefore, was mild and easy.

There is a plain on the east side of the Upper Jordan called Butaiha, made by the silt carried down from the mountains. Peter and the others, as they landed, noticed the wonderful greenness where the spring grass had just grown up on this rich soil.[1] Around the north-eastern edges of this small delta the land rises to the hills. Jesus climbed with his men to a quiet spot there.

Each of the twelve, when on a journey, carried a small, stiff wicker basket over his shoulders, especially when they went into places like Philip's territory, where there were not many Jews. For the custom of the Jews to eat food prepared carefully according to the instructions given in the Law of Moses made it necessary to carry in non-Jewish places a basket with provision for a meal or two. When they went out into all Galilee two by two to carry his Good News and to heal, the Twelve had—we recall—left these baskets behind, by Jesus' own instructions. For they were then in Jewish territory going to Jews only, and could rely on getting food that was ceremonially pure. Now, however,

[1] It is of interest to notice that they carried away such an impression of rich grass—the only time when such a thing is mentioned in the Gospels. Mark (from Peter's dictation) emphasizes its greenness (Mark vi. 39) and John, who never copies from Mark, says independently how thick the grass was (John vi. 10). The silt soil, the springtime, and the Jordan waters combine to this day to make a pasture here very unusual in quality in stony Palestine.

they were starting out into the half-pagan territory of Philip, and into a desert place.

They sat on the rocks and, opening these travelling food-baskets, ate their food.[1] They began to pour out to Jesus the story of their adventures. Around and below them sheep nibbled the rich, fresh grass, watched by a shepherd and a shepherd-boy. What a lovely place for resting away from the crowd. They gazed out on the land, spread out like a map below them. The sun glinted on the waters of the lake to the south, as well as on the thin ribbon of the Upper Jordan on the west, beyond which, five miles away, lay Capernaum. Between them and the Jordan was a small town. It was another Bethsaida (or Fisherhome). This semi-Greek town, over a mile above the shore of the lake, had just been rebuilt by Philip the Tetrarch. In honour of Julia, the Roman Emperor's daughter, he had named it Bethsaida Julias.

Looking westward to the right, Jesus was startled to see a great crowd of people moving across the plain. Many of them were running towards him and his disciples. They had watched the direction that Peter's boat with Jesus on board had taken. The word had spread that Jesus was leaving the land. A wave of common impulse surged through the multitude. Jesus was the King for them. He had the power to overthrow Rome and Herod, and to set up David's throne. Now, now was the time that might never come again.

So the people ran along the lake-side and up the west bank of the Jordan for two miles. Then, leaping from boulder to boulder and splashing through the waters of the ford, they hurried over the plain. They had caught sight of Jesus on the hill. The quiet rest that Jesus had planned for talking over the apostles' adventures on their journeys was ruined.

As Jesus saw the thousands of folk hastening towards him, it was not the annoyance of baulked plans that moved him, but their helplessness. He saw how they hungered for life,

[1] The Greek word for this particular basket *Kophinos* (Latin *cophinus*) is used in the record: Matthew xiv. 20; Mark vi. 43; Luke ix. 17.

for liberty, for fuller, freer growth. Hurrying across the plain, they looked like a flock of hungering, bewildered sheep with no one to guide them. The vision that had flamed in Ezekiel flashed into Jesus' mind; that picture painted in strong strokes of anger and pity—of the people as 'sheep scattered', a prey to wild beasts; diseased, but not tended; wounded, but not bound up; lost, but not sought for; starved and harried 'because there is no shepherd'; the prophet's scathing picture of the so-called shepherds eating the sheep and clothing themselves in the wool, but never feeding the flock.[1] It was a perfect description of this scattered, distressed people and of their so-called shepherds, the wealthy High Priest and his sons, rolling in wealth fleeced from the pilgrim Jews.

Jesus gathered the crowd round him and, seated on a rock where all the five thousand could see him and he could see them, began to teach them. Some, who were sick, he healed. All sense of time was lost as they drank in his words. The sun sank toward the horizon. The shadows lengthened across the hill and the plain, till at last the vast Safed hills to the north-west threw their gigantic shade across the landscape. The disciples whispered to one another. They began to grow uneasy. They moved up from where they had sat with the crowd and said to Jesus quietly:

'This place is desert. The day is almost ended. Send these people away. Let them go to the farms and into the villages round about to buy some food for themselves.'

'Give them some food yourselves,' replied Jesus.

'Where shall we buy bread for all these people to eat?' he asked, turning to Philip.

They threw up their hands in despair.

'Are we to go and buy two thousand denarii worth[2] of food?' they asked—as who should say, 'Are we genii that we should make something out of nothing.'

[1] Ezekiel xxxiv. 1–15; also Numbers xxvii. 17.

[2] Some ten pounds' worth in modern reckoning.

'Even that,' added Philip, 'would not be enough for everyone to get a piece of bread.'

'Well, how many loaves have you got?' asked Jesus returning to his original suggestion. 'Go and see,' he added, as they hesitated.

They had, as we have seen, earlier in the day finished all that was in their own twelve small travelling baskets. Here, however, was a boy—likely enough a shepherd-boy grazing his flock close by—with the food brought in his pouch. The boy pulled out all that he had on him, five flat circular loaves made of barley flour and two fish caught in the Jordan close by or in the lake.

'There is a boy here,' said Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, 'who has five barley loaves and a couple of fish. But what is that,' he added, 'among so many?'

'Make the people all sit down in companies,' said Jesus.

Swiftly the disciples, puzzled but obedient, organized the multitude in groups of hundreds and of fifties on the thick green grass. Jesus then stood in full sight of them all. He took up the five loaves and the two cooked fish.

The boy gazed, his wonder touched with anxiety as to what the Rabbi would do with his food; for it was all he had and he was a hungry boy. With loaves and fish in his hand, Jesus lifted his face to the sky and asked a blessing of God on them and gave thanks. Then, taking one loaf, he broke pieces from it and handed the fragments to the disciples. They took them and moved about along the ranks of the people feeding them. So also he took the fish and fed the people with them, including the boy who had given them to him and all the other boys in the crowd.

The boy gazed with rapt wonder at the man through whom the wonderful power of God was working to feed these thousands—and to feed them with his little stock of food. His!

When the disciples came back to Jesus to say that all the people were satisfied, he said, 'Now gather up the broken

bits that are still uneaten.' Each disciple took his *kophinos*, his travelling food-basket, and began to pick up the bits. When they had finished the baskets of all the Twelve were filled.

This act of Jesus brought the wave of the people's enthusiasm to a climax. Their wrath at Herod's recent beheading of John the Baptist was still burning. Here was a new Moses feeding the people in the wilderness. He could lead them out of the desert of Roman and Herodian despotism into the promised land of the free Jewish Kingdom under God. Through the crowd the mass emotion rushed like a torrent.

'This is, indeed, the Prophet who was to come into the world,' they cried to one another.

The crowd began to surge like a tide toward him. They meant to make Jesus their King. With him at their head, with the power of the Eternal that had so miraculously fed them flowing through him, he could lead them to conquer Herod and Rome and bring in the Golden Age, the Reign of God.

Jesus saw the danger of such mob-passion. He instantly made his decision. Swiftly he told the disciples to go off down to the shore where the boat was beached and sail her westward to Capernaum. They went, leaving him alone with the multitude.

He then stood up and spoke to them. His authority awed them. He told them that he must be alone. They must go back. He would come again to them. 'Go in peace,' he said. So they trailed away back across the plain, talking excitedly.

A good many of the crowd, however, including the younger hot-heads, did not disperse. They decided to stay there on the plain till morning, when Jesus would come down the hill, and then would again try to make him their King, to lead them into freedom. Jesus turned his back on the lake and the plain and walked up the hill in the gathering darkness.

He must get silence and solitude. For again a decisive hour had come. The gathering storm had massed its clouds

in the sky and the hills echoed the muttering of the distant thunder. The hate of the Pharisees and the Scribes, the death of John the Baptist, the suspicions of Herod, the wild enthusiasm of the people for him—all these things called for swift, decisive action. What must he do?

He must train his men before any crisis should end his work.

Under the stars, with all other voices silenced, he listened to the Voice of the Eternal Father. He got new strength and peace, courage and will-power from the quiet companionship of God under the eternal stars.

The truth that Jesus saw that night on that hill governed the whole of his work up to the end. From that night, as we shall see, he never stayed long among the people in Galilee or lived in Capernaum. Every now and then he passed through, but that was all. He went through the length and breadth of the land outside Herod's territory and outside Judaea, occasionally returning but never for long. Sometimes he taught the people; sometimes he healed them. But always, until the last adventure came, his central work was to teach the Twelve how to carry his Kingdom to the world when he had left them.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE ATTACK ON THE SCRIBES

AS Jesus was praying there on the hill-side the wind began to moan. Looking toward the lake, under the light of the thin sickle of the Passover moon, he saw the gathering storm first ruffle, then lash the surface of the water. He knew the sudden fury of these lake storms.

Descending the hill, he walked across the plain to the beach. Peter's boat had long ago started for Capernaum; it held the men on whom the future of his work hung. Born on the lake-shore the young fishermen from boyhood knew every mood of their fickle lake: its furious tantrums, its lovely smiles, its calm sleep. To-night it was at its most furious. They could make no headway. They wrestled against wind and wave. Swept by the spray, battered by the shock of billow after billow, they rowed in the teeth of the gale.

They were hugging the shore, but under the stress of the wind it was of no avail. They could hardly move against the tempest. Swiftly Jesus came along the beach westward till he was alongside. Then he walked straight out towards them. Seeing his form looming mistily through the darkness under the stormy sky, they thought they saw a ghost. They shrieked with fear.

'Courage, courage,' came the voice that they knew so well. 'It is I. Be not afraid.'

He climbed into the boat. At that moment the wind dropped. They were astounded. Setting to work again at the oars with a new will they swiftly passed from east to west along the north shore of the lake. They did not stop at Capernaum, but rowed farther on towards Magdala. They beached their boat on the open shore of the Plain of Gennesaret. Leaping out, they walked ashore.

No sooner, however, was Jesus on the beach than he was

recognized. Men ran hurriedly hither and thither to say that he was back again. They soon came streaming down the paths from all sides, from Magdala, Capernaum, Chorazin —all the villages and towns—to be healed and to hear him. So great was their faith in him, and so great his power, that if they could only touch the tassel of his robe they were healed.

At some point in the discussions that we shall now follow they moved toward Capernaum, and Jesus continued his teaching there in the Synagogue.

Among the crowd stood a frowning group of bearded wise-looking Scribes from Jerusalem. Some of the lake-side Pharisees, who had been watching Jesus closely and had seen the excitement of the crowds, had sent to Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had consequently sent a group of Scribes from Jerusalem to make inquiries. As these Scribes and the local Pharisees watched Jesus and his men, they saw that some of Jesus' disciples actually broke their bread with unwashed hands and ate it. The whole group came to Jesus and challenged him.

'Why', they asked, 'do your disciples defy the Tradition of the Elders, the Torah? Why do they take their food with unclean hands?'

This did not mean that the disciples hands were physically dirty, but simply that they were ceremonially 'unclean'. The hands must, the Tradition said, be rinsed in water up to the wrist before touching food. To wash cups and jugs and basins that had been touched by other hands and to wash food that came from the market before eating it, were rules that were based on sound ideas of good health. But the Tradition of the Elders had now exaggerated this Law to such an extent that to eat without washing was likened to the lowest kind of vice. You could be cut off from membership in the synagogue for it.

The Scribes' question was very clever. They wagged their beards with immense satisfaction when they decided on it.

Jesus, they said to one another, could not deny that his disciples ate with hands unwashed. So he was bound either to defend the sin, in which case they could bring against him a charge of teaching people to break the Law, or to change his ways, in which case their own battle was won. Little did they expect the vehement attack that he made on them. The Man who had just been stooping over a sick boy, a strong, tender doctor to heal, now stood erect.

'You play-actors,' he turned his eyes full on them, 'hypocrites, hiding your faces behind masks, Isaiah was right when he said about you—

> ' "This people honours me with their lips,
> But their heart is far away from me:
> Their worship of me is worthless." '

For they laid down merely human rules.[1]

'Yes,' he went on, 'you cancel out what God says; and you hold on to your own Traditions. A praiseworthy thing, indeed, to set God's own commandment at naught, so that you can keep up your own prejudices. Moses said: "Honour thy father and mother,"[2] and "He who curses his father or mother must suffer death".[3] But you say that, if your father or mother is in need and ask you for something, you can refuse to help them, if you have put into the Treasury a little of your possessions, keeping all the rest for yourself. For then you can say, "What you want is Korban" (i.e. it is a gift to the Temple and cannot be touched). So you no longer help father or mother, and you make God's law a nothing by your tradition that you have handed down. Yes,' he concluded, 'and you do many things like that.'

Muttering vengeance, the deputation of Scribes and Pharisees made off. Jesus, meanwhile, called the crowd to close in again. To them he summed up the whole story in one of those little proverbial sayings of his, whose rhythm, antithesis, paradox, and repetition were so easy to remember:

[1] Isaiah xxix. 13. [2] Exodus xx. 12. [3] Exodus xxi. 17.

'Listen to me,' he said, 'all of you, and understand this:

'Nothing from outside
That enters into a man
Can defile him.
The things that from within
Go out of a man
These defile him.'

The disciples came close to him and asked him—

'Do you know that the Pharisees were greatly offended by what you said?'

'Any plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up,' he replied calmly. 'Leave them alone. They are blind guides. And if one blind man leads another, both will fall into some pit.'

Honest Peter was, however, still puzzled by the things Jesus had said to the crowd.

'Explain to us this parable,' he pleaded.

'Are even you,' Jesus asked him in astonishment, 'totally without intelligence? Do you not grasp that what you swallow goes into the stomach and is afterwards ejected from the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart; it is these that defile a man. Evil plottings, killing, sensual indulgence, stealing, telling lies about people, slander—these come from the heart. That is what defiles a man: he is not defiled by eating with unwashed hands.'

What had happened, meanwhile, to the hot-headed nationalists who, we remember, waited all night on the plain on the other side of the Jordan in order to link up with Jesus when he descended from his retreat in the hills? When dawn came they were bewildered by his non-appearance. What could have happened? They had seen that Jesus did not go aboard with his disciples when they sailed the night before. At last they gave it up. A number of Tiberias boats were on the beach. Hiring these, they set off along the north shore

for Capernaum. Having crossed the lake to the Gennesaret side, they proceeded to make inquiries. At last they found him in the Synagogue at Capernaum.

'Rabbi,' they cried in astonishment, 'when did you come here?'

Jesus ignored their question.

'The fact of the matter is', he said, 'that you are hunting for me, not because you have seen wonders, but because you ate the loaves and had a good meal. Do not set your mind on the food that perishes, but on the food that lasts unto Eternal life, the food that the Son of Man will give you, for on him the Father has put his seal of approval.'

'What are we to do then?' they asked, 'so that we may carry out what God wishes?'

'Above everything else,' Jesus answered, 'you should be believers in him whom God has sent.'

'What miracle will you do, then, that we can see and become believers in you? What do you really do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert, as it is written—"He gave them bread out of heaven to eat." '[1]

Here they were back again on the desire for a leader who would feed them well.

'I tell you in solemn fact', replied Jesus, 'that Moses did not give you the bread out of Heaven, but my Father is giving you the bread—the true bread—out of Heaven; for God's bread is what comes down out of Heaven and gives Life to the world.'

'Sir,' they cried, 'always give us that bread.'

'I am the bread of life,' Jesus replied. 'He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never, never thirst. But', he went on, seeing their bewildered, disappointed faces—'it is just as I have said to you: you have seen me and yet you do not believe.' He continued to try to explain.

Meanwhile, some of the Jews were arguing vigorously

[1] Exodus xvi. 15; Psalm lxxviii. 24.

with one another about it, and denouncing Jesus' claim to be the bread from God.

'Is not this man Joseph's son?' they asked, throwing up their arms in despair of his sanity. 'Is he not Jesus, whose father and mother we know? What, then, does he mean by this talk about "I have come down out of heaven" ?'

'Stop muttering complaints among yourselves,' Jesus interposed. 'In solemn truth I tell you I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert and they died. Here is the bread that comes down out of heaven that man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread come down out of Heaven.'

At this, the Jews broke out into angry debate and a fierce discussion went on even among the outer circle of his own followers, during which Jesus again tried to make his meaning clear.

'It is the spirit that gives life,' he reiterated. 'The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and are Life.'

In sheer disgust, large numbers of those who had so enthusiastically run across the Upper Jordan to the plain and had waited through the night for him and then sailed back till they found him, now left Jesus. They left him for ever. It was not that they could not understand him. They grasped clearly enough what he meant. He meant that he was not going to be a King-leader to give them bread to eat; he was bringing food for their eternal souls, real life for their real selves. But it was loaves and the political kingdom that they wanted. He refused to lend himself to this. So they left him.

Jesus turned to the Twelve.

'Will you go too?' he asked.

'Master,' Simon Peter blurted out, 'to whom are we to go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe, yes, we are certain, that you are the holy one from God.'

Jesus looked around the circle of eager faces, those young men on whom he was risking everything. What a group it was! Yet even here was treachery.

'Have I not chosen you Twelve?' he said, and added: 'And one of you is a devil.'

Had Judas of Kerioth the Judaean nationalist already begun to feel—like these who now left Jesus—that he disappointed their desire for a new Jewish kingdom?

In the background, the angry, thwarted Scribes and the Pharisees wove their cunning plans for his death. The Scribes went back to Jerusalem to report the rebellion Jesus was raising against the Traditions. Caiaphas, the High Priest, and Annas, his father-in-law, old in craft and as cold as steel, began to weave their webs—to plot towards his death.

CHAPTER XL

CITIES OF THE SEA AND THE HILLS

'GET away from here,' a group of Pharisees warned Jesus at this time. 'Herod wants to kill you.' They expected this would frighten him. But Jesus flashed back to them with his careless courage a cryptic message that gave them and Herod food for thought.

'Go', he said, 'and tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out daemons and do healings to-day and to-morrow; and the next day my work is done." Yet I must journey on to-day and to-morrow and the next day, for', he added with biting irony, 'it would not do that a prophet should die outside Jerusalem.'

If Jesus was not to meet the same fate as John the Baptist, a swift, secret execution in a dungeon, it was now high time for him to leave Herod Antipas' territory. The story of how, on a wave of passion, a multitude of five thousand Jews from all over Galilee made an excited mass-movement to acclaim Jesus King had certainly already reached Antipas' jealous ears. His Tiberias palace was barely an hour's sail from the place where it happened in his half-brother Philip's land.[1] The peril from Herod troubled Jesus far less than that these enormous multitudes should have such a twisted and false idea of his Good News of the Kingdom as to try to make him a national king.

Herod threatened Jesus with death for heading a nationalist uprising. Many of the crowd turned their backs on him for refusing to head one. Both of these attitudes, however, pointed one way. The peril from Herod, the false ideas of the crowds, the turning back of many disciples—all threw an intense light on the one need. If Jesus' message was to live on in the world, he himself must still have time to let

[1] Herod Antipas was the second son of Herod the Great and Malthake. Philip was the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem.

the little group of his Twelve disciples know him so fully that they would be able to carry the knowledge of him to the world.

The Passover moon was now in the sky.[1] Jesus would, in the ordinary way, have gone to Jerusalem for that Feast. To do so this year, however, would be to court death before his men were really ready to carry on his work. So he decided, instead, to lead them beyond reach of the sword-arm of Herod.

He had, as we have seen, already tried to do this by sailing with his men across the lake to Philip's territory. But the multitude, rushing across the river to him, had baulked that plan. He must now take more drastic steps to secure quiet time for talking continuously with his disciples.

Jesus therefore made preparations and started with the Twelve north-westward over the hills. Turning away from the lake, they climbed the hill-sides north of Capernaum. Passing Chorazin, they mounted the winding, rocky way until they felt the spring breezes whipping their tunics about their knees. They passed from six hundred feet below sea-level to two thousand feet above the Mediterranean. The white turban of Mount Hermon, the 'Sheikh's' winter snows, that were still unmelted, shone from the north-east. At last they topped a crest from which the long tawny stretch of the coast of Phoenicia could be seen and, beyond it, the gleam of sails on the Great Sea.

As they came, mile after mile, down the ravines that lead to the sea, they met swarthy, hook-nosed, long-faced, wiry folk, from Tyre and Sidon. At last they reached the rocky island close by the shore, surrounded by the heavy walls and covered with close-packed roofs of Tyre. On either side of this island ships from many ports were riding at anchor.[2] No men had ever sailed so far as these fearless sea-rovers of the Phoenician coast, whose voyages ran from the south of

[1] Probably A.D. 29.

[2] The south harbour is now quite silted up; the north is still used.

Africa to the islands of Britain, where they bartered the glass beads of Sidon for tin from Cornish mines. These Phoenicians were great merchants. They came—as Simon and the others knew—with their camel-caravans over the hill-roads with merchandise to Capernaum.[1]

Jesus must keep himself unknown if he was to have time and quiet to teach his men. He and the Twelve had walked full forty miles from Capernaum when they came out on the narrow sea-plain on which Tyre[2] juts into the sea. As they drew nearer, they saw the wonderful bridge-causeway built centuries before by Alexander the Great to link to the land the rocky island. For Tyre had resisted all Alexander's powers of siege for seven months. The Phoenician word—Tyre—means 'the Rock'. Translated into Greek or Latin, it would be Simon's nickname—Cephas or Petros. Over this broad causeway porters bore on their backs colossal burdens from the ships—sacks of woollen goods to be dyed, jars of wine and oil, bundles of hammered copper trays and bowls from Cyprus. Boisterous sailors swaggered by from every nation around the Great Sea. In the bazaars of Tyre hung silks dyed with the marvellous purple of the curious mollusc in whose body was secreted a drop of the precious colouring that went to dye robes for Emperors and togas for Roman nobles.

Jesus had thus led his companions away from the deep basin of the lake and the life of Jewry into the outer heathen world. Here they were exposed to all the winds and currents of the nations. Later on these men of his would have to face that great world with his message—but without him. As Peter gazed out to sea that evening into the sunset across the ships' masts, his adventurous spirit may well have longed to sail the waters of this vaster sea. He little guessed, however, that some day he himself would voyage for Jesus across that

[1] Mark iii. 8, and Luke vi. 17.

[2] The English Revised Version makes much clearer than the Authorized the fact that Jesus went through Tyre and Sidon.

'Peter's adventurous spirit longed to sail on the deep waters of this vaster sea.'

Fishermen on the coast of Palestine in the Bay of Acre with Haifa and the western end of Mount Carmel.

water to imperial Rome itself. Yet it was just for such adventure that Jesus was preparing Simon and the others during those great days of walking across the hills and by the sea. They went into a house; for Jesus wished to be hidden.

A woman, however—a mother in terrible distress about her daughter—found out somehow that he was there. She was not a Jewess, but a Phoenician woman who spoke Greek – a native of this part of Syria. Although Jesus' own language was Aramaic, he understood and could speak Greek.[1] The daughter of this Syro-Phoenician woman was tormented by an evil spirit. The woman came into the courtyard of the house where Jesus was staying. He was reclining there taking food with his friends. The pet dog of the house and the puppies, who were, indeed, almost part of the family, were getting some friendly scraps thrown to them from the table.

The woman had already spoken to the disciples, pleading with them to get the Master to cast the daemon out of her daughter. They tried to shake her off, knowing that Jesus wished to remain in privacy, but she was in despair for the child that she loved so much, and she would not go away.

'Send her away,' said the disciples to Jesus; 'she keeps waiting behind us.'

If Jesus healed her child he was likely to get crowds round him and his object in coming to this coast would be frustrated.

'Sir,' she cried, flinging herself at his feet, 'Son of David, my daughter is cruelly tormented by an evil spirit. Drive, oh, drive the daemon out of her.'

'I am sent first', Jesus said, 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. My work is to carry my Message to the Jewish nation. Let the boys and girls of the house first eat their meal.' He went on, 'It is not right to take the bread from them and throw it to the puppies'.

He must have said this with a smile and in a spirit of kindly

[1] His brother James in later years wrote a very strong and beautiful letter which we have in Greek, apparently straight from his hand, which is included in the small Greek library that is called 'The New Testament'.

banter; for with swift wit she replied, pointing to the little dogs,

'True, Sir, yet the puppies under the table get the children's scraps.'

Jesus was delighted with her wit and moved to the depths by her spirit of simplicity, her persistence, and her faith.

'O woman,' he replied, 'you have great faith. What you wish is granted. Go home. The daemon has already gone out of your daughter.'

Trembling with hopes and fears, the woman flew home as fast as her feet would carry her. There, to her joy, she found her daughter lying quietly on her bed, free for ever from the daemon that had tortured her.

Jesus moved out again on the trail. For over twenty-five miles he and his men walked northward with the Great Sea always on their left and the hills that rise up into the Lebanon on their right. They crossed the swiftly running stream of Leontes that comes down the shadowed ravines between the mighty roots of Mount Hermon. At the end of the day they saw a greater harbour and a nobler city than even Tyre. It was Sidon, famous all over the Roman Empire for its exquisite glass, and busy with the bustle of a port.

Jesus here turned inland up deep winding gorges. Then, setting their faces again toward their Galilean homeland, they moved on slowly for day after day over the rolling hills south-eastward. During the early part of these days of walking, the comradeship was unbroken by the clamour of crowds. No adventures came to them; no works of healing were done. In the light of the stories that his men told him of their adventures when they went out two by two, he taught them their great life-craftsmanship of becoming fishers of men. In talk with Simon and Andrew, James and John, and the rest, he showed them what they were to teach and the spirit in which they were to live; so that when he should have left them they could be his voice and hands to lead folk into the Kingdom of his love.

When, moving eastward, they had crossed the upper waters of the stripling Jordan, they came into the wide, high lands of Decapolis—the Ten Cities. Several hundred years before Jesus' day these cities were established by Greek people when Alexander the Great led his armies over this land on the way to India. They now had formed the League of Decapolis. Shaped like a fan whose fringes swept the edge of the desert from Damascus in the north to Philadelphia[1] in the south, while its handle rested on the west of the river in Scythopolis, this League of ten Greek Cities ruled the land —under the Roman Emperor—from Jordan right to the eastern wilderness.

One of the cities, Gadara, looked from these eastern hills where Jesus and the Twelve were, down on to the Lake of Galilee. It had its amphitheatre where gladiators struggled with lions, and chariots raced; its temples where incense rose before the altars of 'the most high Zeus', and of the tower-crowned goddess, Astarte; its many-coloured bustling crowds in the marble-colonnaded streets; its marvellous aqueduct, which brought water across thirty miles to its citizens.

Gadara was famous, too, for its brilliant wits, writers, and teachers: men like Meleager, who had written sparkling epigrams; Menippus, who wrote biting satires on the vices of the people; and Theodorus, the rhetorician, who was tutor to the boy-emperor Tiberius, now Emperor of Rome itself.

In all these ten cities the folk talked Greek, worshipped Greek gods, played Greek games, read and wrote Greek books. And two of these cities were closer to the Lake of Galilee than even Nazareth itself.

Jesus went southward through this land with his men. They were now on the rolling uplands east of the Lake of Galilee. Jesus' fame was already here. Not far away he had cast the evil spirits out of the daemoniac among the Gadarene tombs. Crowds began to gather. A deaf man who stammered was brought for him to heal. Jesus took the man aside

[1] Now Amman.

away from the crowd. He put a finger into each of the man's ears. Then he told the man to open his mouth. Looking upward, opening his own spirit to the full flow of God's power, with a deep sigh Jesus called out in his native Aramaic—'Ephphatha—Be opened.' At that the gates of the man's hearing were opened and the shackles were loosed from his speech. He talked plainly and could hear all that was said to him. Jesus, wanting to avoid the great multitude around him, told the man and those with him not to talk about what he had done. But the more he emphasized this, the more the folk spread the news of his power, saying to one another—

> 'How wonderfully he does everything!
> He actually makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.'

Many of them were non-Jews, people of the Greek population. All, however, united in praising God, 'the God of Israel' as they said, for what he was doing through Jesus.

The crowds grew greater and greater as people came from all sides to see Jesus. For three whole days in one solitary place they crowded about him. There were fully four thousand people. At last every one's provision of food had been eaten. Jesus called his men together to discuss the solution.

'I am sorry for this crowd,' he said. 'They have been here now with me for three days. They have nothing to eat. Supposing that I send them home, they will faint by the way. Some of them, indeed, have come from far.'

His disciples looked at one another helplessly. They threw up their hands in despair.

'Where can one get loaves enough to satisfy this crowd in a deserted place like this?' they asked.

'How many loaves have you?' asked Jesus.

After a hurried search the answer came—'Seven'.

Some one had caught a few small fish and cooked them. These, too, Jesus took. He then blessed and broke the loaves and fishes, and divided them. All the multitude were fed.

Indeed, it took seven large round wicker baskets—'Maunds'[1] as they are called—to hold the broken fragments of food that were left over. Jesus gave instruction to a disciple to go down to the lake-side and to hold a boat in readiness.

'Now,' he said to the crowd, 'I ask you to go back to your homes as I am about to leave your country.'

He then went down to the beach, and getting into the boat, they turned her bows toward the southern end of the lake.

There a group of Pharisees came to him and said:

'Give us a sign from Heaven'—do some wonder they meant—'that shall prove who you are; some miracle that tells us that God sent you.'

Jesus had, as we have seen, never worked any wonder of healing or of feeding in order to astonish people or show his power; he in every case simply met the need and took away the suffering of people by powers that, he said, his followers could use as much as he himself.

Jesus heaved a deep sigh at this demand by the Pharisees. He was bitterly disappointed that they could not take what he was and what he said and see that the truth and power of God were there. He turned to the crowds that thronged around him.

'This present generation', he said, 'is a wicked generation.
It insists on some sign,
But no sign shall be given to it,
Except the sign of Jonah;
For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites,
So shall the Son of Man be a token to this generation.
The Queen from the South will arise at the judgement
With the men of this generation and will condemn them;
For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon,

[1] The one other place where this kind of basket is mentioned is in connexion with letting Paul down from the window in Damascus, which indicates the size of these round, loosely woven rush baskets, very different from the small wicker food-baskets used for a similar purpose after the feeding of the five thousand.

And mark you one greater than Solomon is here.
The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgement together
With the present generation and will condemn it;
For when Jonah preached they did repent,
And, mark you, one greater than Jonah is here.'

This criticism was maddening for orthodox Jews to hear. It infuriated them for the same reason that Jesus' earlier attack on his critics at Nazareth had angered them. For here again he showed out of the Hebrew sacred books heathen pagan people—non-Jews—setting a higher standard than the Jews themselves.

The Queen of Sheba from Africa—he recalled to the listening crowd—had travelled hundreds of miles to drink in the wisdom of the Hebrew King Solomon. The people across the desert in Assyrian Nineveh had attended to the voice of the Hebrew prophet Jonah. Yet, when one greater than either of these came to the Hebrew people, their leaders refused to listen. Even the rank and file, who followed him for bread and healing, left him when they heard him make demands that would change their lives.

One Pharisee, after this, asked Jesus to come and take a meal with him at his house. Jesus, when they reached the house, went straight in and reclined on the place set for him at the table. The Pharisee said that he was astonished that Jesus had not followed Moses' law to rinse his hands to the wrist. Jesus said to him:

'Now we see how you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the plate;

'But your hearts are full of greed and selfishness,
Foolish men; did not he who made the outside make the inside also.
Better make what is within clean,[1] then nothing will be unclean for you.

[1] St. Luke's word means 'give alms'. The Aramaic for give alms is 'zakki'. The Aramaic, however, for 'cleanse' is 'dakki'. The sound is

Woe to you, Pharisees!
You pay your tenth of the tiniest plants, mint and rue and every garden herb,
But justice and the love of God you ignore.
These are the things you ought to have attended to
While not neglecting the other.
Woe to you, Pharisees!
You love the front seats in the synagogues,
You like to be bowed to in public places.
Woe to you!
You are like hidden tombs;
Men walk over them without knowing.'

'You are insulting us as well,' bridled an angry teacher of the Law of Moses as he heard this, 'when you say these things.'

Jesus turned on him, too, and diagnosed the disease of the lawyers.

'Yes, woe to you jurists also!
You load men with cumbersome burdens
And you will not raise a finger to help them.
Woe to you; you build tombs for the prophets whom your own fathers put to death.
So you bear witness and agree with what your fathers did.
They killed, you build.
Woe to you Lawyers!
You have taken the key that unlocks the door of knowledge.
You have not gone in yourselves
And you have hindered those who were going to enter.'

Jesus burned with pure indignation because these men whose official work it was to be the channels of God's will were the very people who placed on other men's shoulders the burden of outward obedience to a myriad rules instead of leading them to a life in which the heart was moved to work love and justice. They were the real obstacles to the Kingdom of God.

very similar, and the words were, indeed, originally the same; so that St. Luke, who was a Greek, or the scribe who copied the manuscript confused them.

The Pharisees and Scribes by the Lake of Galilee were furious with Jesus. They conspired together to set snares for catching Jesus in his words or acts. They wanted to get a charge against him that would secure his condemnation both under the Roman rule and the Jewish Law.

Jesus left the crowds and the Pharisee group. He went to the Lakeside and, getting into Peter's boat, sailed towards Bethsaida. As the sails filled and the boat scudded before the wind over the Lake waters, Jesus spoke a warning to his men.

'See to it,' he said; 'be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.'

'Yeast!' they argued among themselves, 'we have no bread at all.' For they had in their haste to get off only brought one flat loaf which was now eaten.

'What is this argument of yours about having no bread?' he asked. 'Do you, too, not see or understand? Are you still so dull? "You have eyes! Can you not see?" ' he cried, quoting Jeremiah. 'You have ears! Can you not hear? And have you no memories?' he pursued, to show how stupid it was to imagine that he was worrying at the lack of provisions. 'How many baskets full of fragments did you pick up when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand?'

'Twelve,' they replied.

'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand?'

'Seven.'

'Do you not understand now?' he concluded, 'I did not speak about bread; but "beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ' Then they grasped that it was the teaching of the Sadducees and the Pharisees that was to be avoided lest, like leaven, it should, when he was gone, make them not men of the Kingdom of Love, but of Law.

The boat grated on the shingle of Bethsaida beach. Jesus went up to the village. When he got there he saw a group coming towards him leading a blind man.

'Touch his eyes,' they begged Jesus, 'so that he may see.'

Jesus wished to give the man his sight; but he wanted to be quiet and not to bring a great crowd about him. So he took the blind man by the hand and led his stumbling footsteps away from the village. When he and the man had passed the last house and were come to the olive and fig orchards, Jesus stopped. He then made spittle and put it on the eyes of the man; and laid his hands on the man.

'Can you see anything?' Jesus asked.

There were people coming down the road.

'I can make out men,' he said excitedly; 'indeed I see them like trees—only walking!'

At this Jesus a second time laid his hands on the man's eyes, who stared hard in front of him. He saw everything distinctly. His sight was recovered.

'Now go to your home,' said Jesus to him, 'and do not even enter into this village.'

CHAPTER XLI

THE POOL OF THE HOUSE OF MERCY

THE Feast of the Passover that year had taken place as we have seen while Jesus was travelling in the north country with his men. That summer he decided, however, to go up from the Lake to Jerusalem to the Feast of Pentecost.[1] As he climbed the hills and wandered through the valleys, the wheatfields were covered only with tawny stubble. For this feast of Harvest Thanksgiving was in the full blaze of May, which is often the hottest month in the year in Palestine.[2]

Thousands of pilgrims were going along the paths towards Jerusalem from every direction. The multitudes at this Feast were almost as great as for the Passover. When Jesus reached Jerusalem and Sabbath morning came, he went up into the City. Near the north wall of the Temple, he turned and went under an arch into a cool shaded place. The dancing reflections of the sun on the water played on the marble columns and arched roofs of arcades that surrounded two square pools.

There were, indeed, three rock-hewn cisterns or pools. One was a sheep-pool,[3] where the lambs and rams were taken to be washed before they were sacrificed in the Temple, whose walls lay only a few yards' distance to the south. The

[1] Taking the view that the visit recorded in John v. to Jerusalem to an unnamed feast, when no disciples are mentioned as present, was at Pentecost A.D. 29.

[2] For description see Chapter VII.

[3] The Greek simply gives an adjective (*probatikos*), meaning 'connected with sheep'. The English Authorized Version inserts the noun 'market'; the Revised Version the noun 'gate'. These are guesses and have no authority. Recent excavation seems to show that neither is right. There was a pool for sheep and two cisterns for human beings. The adjective as used in the Greek agrees in gender with the Greek for 'pool'. (See *Jérusalem*, par R. P. H. Vincent, S.B. Chapitre xxvii, republished as *Le Sanctuaire de Sainte Anne et la Piscine Probatique à Jérusalem*. Paris. J. Gabalda, rue Bonaparte, 90.)

other two cisterns formed together the Pool of the House of Mercy (or Bethesda).[1] This Pool of Bethesda was really two equal square cisterns cut in the rock with a wall of rock between them about twenty feet thick. Each cistern was a hundred and thirty feet square, and thirty feet deep.

As Jesus entered he saw that lovely marble arcades ran round the four sides of the vast oblong, nearly three hundred feet long, made by the two square cisterns. Another arcade ran along the ridge of rock that divided the two pools. Beautiful marble Corinthian columns over thirty feet high supported the roof of these five arcades or porches. Rain-water filled one of these pools. A strange intermittent spring ran into the other. Every now and then, reddish water ran into this cistern, troubling its surface and colouring it. This water, the Jews believed, had wonderful healing powers. When it ran in from the rock-hewn conduit the people believed that an angel was disturbing the water and that the first to get into the pool would be cured of his disease.

As Jesus entered the arcades he saw many sick people lying there on mat-beds or thin mattresses. Some were blind, others were lame, still more had shrivelled arms or legs. One had been ill for thirty-eight years. He was a lonely, friendless man with no companion to help him. It filled Jesus' heart with pity as he thought of how that man had lain there ill ever since before Jesus himself came up to the Temple as a boy. He stopped and stooped over him. The man did not know who Jesus was.

'Do you want to have your health and strength?' Jesus asked.

'Sir,' the man answered hopelessly, 'I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; and while I am crawling down myself some one else slips in before me.'

[1] The actual site of the Pool of Bethesda has been opened up now and sufficient excavation made to show the size and shape and depth, the five porches or arcades, the pillars, &c., as indicated in the Gospel story and as described here.

Jesus stood over him with that commanding power of his and with divine strength pouring from him.

'Get up,' he said to the man, gazing deeply into his eyes. 'Get up; take up your mattress, and—walk!'

Strength flowed into the man's arteries and withered muscles; his heart beat with new power. He felt health tingling in him. He was on his feet, carrying his mat. Jesus slipped away through the crowd, leaving the man dazed with joy. Passing along the arcades, he turned through the arch and left the building. Crossing the street, he went under the arched gateway into the Temple courts.

The healed man, meanwhile, dazed with happiness, his mat on his shoulder, went joyfully out from the Pool of what certainly was now to him Bethesda, the House of Mercy. He, too, crossed into the Temple area. As he strolled along, some of the Temple rulers hurried up angrily.

'This is the Sabbath,' they cried. 'You have no right to be carrying your mattress.'

'But the man who healed me,' he retorted, 'he told me to do it. He said, "Take up your mat and walk." '

'Who was he?' they asked. 'Who was this man who told you, "Take it up and walk"? '

'I don't know,' the man stammered. 'He went away as soon as he had healed me.'

Soon after this Jesus came across the man in the Temple courts.

'See,' said Jesus to him, 'you are now strong and healthy. Do not sin any more, or a worse thing may come upon you.'

In the simplicity of his heart, off went the man to the Jewish authorities.

'It was Jesus, who healed me,' said he to them, pointing out the Master, 'and who told me to take up my mat and walk.'

The rulers of the Jews, so far from being delighted to see a man who had spent most of his lifetime ill on his back now walking in the sunshine in full vigour, were furious with

Jesus for breaking the Sabbath himself in healing the man and for telling the man to break it by carrying his mat. They attacked Jesus. He replied with some baffling words that went far too deep for them.

'As my Father,' he said, 'has continued to work to this hour, so I work, too.'

To go on working the things that God wished to see done in the world was Jesus' task. To heal was God's work. What finer use, then, could be made of the Sabbath than to heal? The Jewish leaders, however, were stung to anger by what Jesus said.

Jesus was now brought before a group of the Sanhedrin to defend himself.

He spoke to them about how he was doing the work of his Father, God; and said that if they really believed Moses they would believe him, for it was of him that he wrote: 'But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?'

'How is this uneducated fellow able to read?'[1] they asked each other in astonishment. Jesus replied that his teaching was not his own, but came from God, who sent him.

'Did not Moses give you the Law?' he asked; 'but none of you sincerely obeys the Law. Otherwise, why do you want to kill me?'

'Kill you,' they exclaimed. 'You are mad. Who wants to kill you?'

Jesus, knowing how the authorities were really plotting his death, ignored this.

'Moses gave you the ceremony of circumcision,' he concluded, 'and you will perform that to a boy on the Sabbath. Why, then, are you furious with me for curing the whole of a man's body—not just cutting him—on the Sabbath? Don't judge by externals; come to just judgements.'

[1] It seems almost certain that John vii. 15–24 originally stood, as its argument clearly suggests, at the end of Chapter V. Sometimes in manuscripts, separate slips, before they were gummed together as scrolls, got into the wrong order. That seems to have happened here.

The Temple authorities were now more certain than ever that this Galilean artisan-rabbi was a dangerous law-breaker and blasphemer who was leading great numbers of people away from the true worship of Jehovah. They felt they were doing God's work in plotting to end his life. Jesus turned his back on Jerusalem and his face once more to the hills of the north and to the Sea of Galilee.

PART V

TOWARDS JERUSALEM

CHAPTER XLII

ROCK OR STONE OF STUMBLING

WHEN a climber having toiled for hours up an enclosed valley reaches a crest, the way ahead suddenly opens in front of him, even to the city that is his goal. So Jesus came at this hour to a ridge from which he could not only look back on the way that he had come but see the way ahead of him. A hard trail it was, with enemies in ambush on either side, and at the end of it a scene that would daunt the bravest hero.

Looking back, what did he see?

He saw how his first days of teaching and healing had brought crowds from all the land to hail him with joy. All was, then, sunshine and smiles of good will. Then men began to see that to follow his teaching they must change their lives, turn their faces to a new goal. Fiery, impatient nationalists, who had at first crowded around him to make him king, turned away disgusted because he would not accept kingship in a new rebellion against Rome. The leaders of his own Jewish people saw that his teaching of the Kingdom of Love clashed mortally with the system of obedience to the traditions and the Law on which their power and wealth were built; so they plotted to find how to accuse him of treason before the Roman ruler, Pontius Pilate. Herod, too, fearing that Jesus would lead a revolution, was waiting his chance to throw him into prison. Jesus' very mother and brothers had tried to stop him, for they were sure that he was out of his senses. His home-town of Nazareth had even tried to kill him.

Looking forward, then, Jesus could from this ridge that he had now crested see that, if he went on teaching his Good News and leading his men to teach it, as well as in practice defying the Tradition of the Elders, it was certain that these hates and fears would unite to kill him. Jesus, therefore, led

his men again out of the hurly-burly of the lakeside into silence and solitude to carry still further his training of the Twelve.

Turning their backs on Capernaum and Bethsaida and climbing the ridge above Chorazin, they pushed on northwards over the hills. Instead of bearing north-west towards Tyre—as on their last journey—they turned north-eastwards towards Mount Hermon. Topping the crest they bore downhill again to the rushing waters of the Upper Jordan where they swirled under the arches of the Bridge of the Daughters of Jacob.[1]

As they crossed that bridge, they stepped out of Herod Antipas' territory into the lands ruled by his half-brother, Philip. Neither Herod nor the Galilee Pharisees nor the Jerusalem high-priest could now disturb their comradeship until by deliberate will Jesus should turn to go and meet them face to face.

They climbed onward up the northward road. Looking down on their left they saw the shallow waters of Huleh, a small lake teeming with fish and bordered by marshes where the leaves of the papyrus plant waved in the breeze. The Jordan flowed swiftly out of this lake, for the waters drop seven hundred feet between Lake Huleh and the Lake of Galilee barely ten miles away. The road on the right above the marshes carried them up and up until they were fully three thousand feet above the level of the Lake of Galilee.

On a hill-side in a quiet secluded place they stopped. Jesus went aside a little way from his men. By a boulder he threw himself on his knees to find light from his Father to see his way and to get strength to meet whatever adventure might face him on the way. As he knelt there the loyal, worshipping hearts of his Twelve men went out to him. Rising from his knees he came close to them and asked:

'Who do the crowds say that I am?'

'John the Baptist,' they answered, 'though some say that

[1] See map and photograph (Pl. XX).

you are Elijah, while still others declare that one of the prophets of old has risen again.'

Then he put to them the supreme question, on the answer to which all depended for him and for them.

'And who do you say that I am?'

There was a pause. Then Simon cried, with insight born of love and worship:

'The Christ, the Son of the Living God.'

Jesus turned to him with shining eyes. Joy was in his heart.

'Happy are you, Simon, Son of John,' he said. 'For it was my Father in heaven, not flesh and blood, that showed this to you. I tell you,' he exclaimed, 'your name is the Rock—Peter—and on this rock I will build my church. The powers of Hades shall not succeed against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Jesus had great joy in that moment. In the hour when the world was against him and he was very lonely, he had taken strength from his Father's love; and now he was glad in the understanding comradeship of a brother. Indeed, Simon, who had watched Jesus with growing hero-worship in those weeks and months together saw in his shining mastery the power of God; saw that Jesus loved God, knew God, and did his will as no man ever had. He was God's Son, in a deep, eternally true way—God's only Son, God's lonely Son, who was living to bring others into that Sonship, that new birth which is the door into the Kingdom of God.

In that moment when Simon first saw Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ, the Church was founded. For the Church is, it must always be, the fellowship of those who do see for themselves that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and give their lives into his hands to follow him. And of these Simon Peter was the first.

Jesus told the disciples not to declare to any one that he was the Christ. He would say that to the world in his own time. They would say it when he was gone. But not now.

Jesus at once began to prepare his men for the hard path that lay ahead. He saw that the conflict between him and the rulers of the Jewish people must soon come to a tragic climax. For—as his experience at the Feast had just shown—the chief priests at the Temple would certainly frame some charge under which they could get the Roman Procurator to pronounce sentence of death. That meant death by a cross. Jesus, rather than turn from his task, heroically faced that death. For a man in full strength and tingling with the joy of living, to go deliberately to meet such a death without flinching called for a courage that impels worship. Peter's declaration, 'Thou art the Christ', led Jesus to begin to prepare his men for the tragedy that faced them.

'I must go up to Jerusalem,' said Jesus to them. 'There I shall suffer many things. I shall be rejected by the Sanhedrin and by the chief priests and the Scribes. I shall be killed; and I shall rise again.'

Simon could not endure this. He took hold of Jesus passionately, and leading him aside began impulsively to take him to task and to reprove him for such forebodings.

'God forbid it, Master,' he cried. 'This must not be.'

Jesus was wounded. He saw Peter's love, but the man was tempting him towards an easy path, away from the steep ascent, like the voice in the wilderness, the Spirit of Evil calling him from the stony, hard way to the easy grass-grown track.

'Behind me, get behind me, Satan,' cried Jesus. 'You are a stumbling-block to me.' The Rock was now a stone in the way to make him either turn aside or trip and fall. 'You look at things,' he said, 'not as God does, but as man does.'

Peter, stunned by this rebuke, shrank back. Turning to his men, Jesus showed them what God's way of looking at suffering was.

'If any man,' he said, 'wishes to walk in my way let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.'

'For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it,
And whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
What good will it do a man to gain the whole world,
If he forfeits his life?
Or what will a man offer to buy back his life?'

The men must have winced as they heard those words—'take up his cross'. They had all seen the dreadful sight of a criminal—some rebel or robber—with a squad of Roman soldiers leading him to execution. They had seen the criminal, by a cold refinement of torture, forced to take up his own cross on his shoulder and carry it to the place of execution. They knew how the criminal was nailed to the cross, on which he was lifted up to hang in agony till death released him. If being a disciple of Jesus meant being ready to carry such a cross to such a death a man must certainly, as Jesus said, count the cost before he decided to follow him.

It might mean death like that to any man who followed Jesus up to Jerusalem and stood by him there—to Simon here or Andrew there. And indeed it did at length mean death on the cross for them both.

CHAPTER XLIII

TRANSFIGURATION

FOR about six days after Simon Peter's declaration[1] Jesus and his men wandered along the tracks among the hills grouped like gnarled roots round the foot of Mount Hermon. They talked of the Kingdom and drank in the grandeur and beauty of the land. Sometimes they saw the snows on the mountain glittering against the blue of the sky. At other times swathes of dazzling white cloud wreathed the peak. Always it was apart, alone.

Jesus, too, was apart, in those days. He climbed with his men towards some high, solitary place. He wanted to be alone with God.

At Caesarea Philippi, the city near to which Jesus was at this time, a rushing, sparkling river sprang full-grown from the foot of Hermon. It is the greater of the two main sources of the Jordan. The other comes down from the side of ancient Dan, a little further west—also at the foot of Mount Hermon.

This stream at Caesarea Philippi, over thirty feet wide, comes out of the very earth at the foot of a cliff. The waters rushing along between overhanging trees are fed century after century from inexhaustible waters beneath Mount Hermon. The vehement loveliness of these dancing waters thrills the spirit of man. The mystery and wonder of their secret, unfathomed source has always called out worship. The ancient Canaanites over a thousand years before Jesus came, worshipped Baal by that stream. The Greeks believed that the God of Nature, Pan, with his laughing nymphs, haunted this spot. And when Jesus was there, on the front of the great cliff was a temple of worship to Pan. Indeed, the place was called Panias until Philip the Tetrarch rebuilt the city and

[1] Luke however says it was eight days later, probably using a common Jewish mode of reckoning inclusively the days at each end.

'The Greeks believed that the god of nature, Pan, with his laughing nymphs, haunted this lovely spot.'

Greek inscription to Pan and Temple niche at Caesarea Philippi in the cliff below which the Jordan source rushes out.

PLATE XXII

called it Caesarea, in honour of the Emperor at Rome and Philippi after himself, to distinguish it from the port of Caesarea, where Pontius Pilate lived on the coast.[1]

Leaving nine of his men near this place Jesus took with him the inner group of his three closest friends—Peter, James, and John—who again and again were chosen to be with him in stress and strain and in hours of vision, and led them still higher up the shoulders of Mount Hermon. Night came, they had reached

> . . . the loftiest hill
> Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty . . .
> Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling place.[2]

Jesus went a little apart from the three and prayed. He knelt long, wrestling in spirit, and pouring out his heart. He saw the way of suffering ahead of him. He saw the vision of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of man. For that he had lived. For that he now faced death in terrible guise. The three men stayed near, perplexed in spirit, watching their Master. But the tiredness of healthy youth after long days in the open-air overcame them. Their heads dropped. Their eyes would stay open no longer. Peter, James, and John slept.

To Jesus, as he knelt on that mountain-side, the suffering of the greatest heroes of his people came to help him. Moses, who spurned the luxury of Pharaoh's palaces to lead his nation through the hunger and thirst of burning deserts in order to win freedom for his people; Elijah, who did fearful battle with bestial heathenism to set beyond all defiance the truth that God is one and is good—the spirits of these mighty

[1] The Arabs still call it Banias (they are unable to pronounce 'p'), and there is still clearly visible, carved in the stone of the cliff face, an ancient Greek inscription saying 'Pan and his nymphs inhabit this spot'. (See photograph, Pl. XXII). This source is 1,029 feet above sea-level, over 1,800 feet above the Lake of Galilee. The cliff at whose foot it springs is at the base of a mount that rises to 2,500 feet above sea-level, behind which is another height rising to 4,000 feet, while behind and above them all Mount Hermon, covered with snow for eight months of the year, attains a height of over 9,000 feet.

[2] Matthew Arnold.

men of God's knighthood visited him. Their spirits came like messengers from God to brace his soul. He saw that the death he must meet and the conquest over death that he would achieve were needed to carry to triumph all that Moses and Elijah lived and died to win—the Rule of God in the lives of men.

In the wonder of that vision his face glowed.

Suddenly the three men were awakened. Still heavy with sleep, they rubbed their eyes in confused amazement. When they were wide awake they were filled with wonder. In the pale misty light that on a mountain peak breaks the power of the night, but is not yet dawn, Jesus knelt. His face was radiant. They saw 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. His robe gleamed more dazzling white than any earthly fuller could whiten it. Voices fell on their ears. The shapes of God's messengers to Jesus—Moses and Elijah—loomed mistily in the half-light. Peter, always the first to break in with some impetuous thought, cried out, confusedly, so awe-stricken that he knew neither what to say, nor what he was saying, but eager to act:

'Rabbi, it is good to be here. If you wish it, I will put up three tents here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'

Even while he said this, a cloud swept across the mountain bluff and engulfed them all. A higher Presence, the Spirit of the Lord God, came upon them. The Voice that Jesus heard as he came up out of the water of the Jordan spoke again:

> 'This is my son, the Beloved,
> In him is my delight,
> Listen to him.'

The three men fell on their faces in awe and lay there. Jesus came to them and touched them on the shoulder.

'Rise up,' he said, 'do not be afraid.'

The cloud had passed. Quickly looking round they saw no one, save Jesus only.

When dawn was now fully come, as Peter, James, and John were walking down from the mountain with Jesus to join the others he said to them:

'Do not tell the vision to any one until the Son of Man be risen from the dead.'

So the three kept this strange event a secret even from the other disciples whom they found waiting for them down below. Indeed, there was no immediate opportunity of saying anything. For they found to their surprise a great crowd around the other disciples, who were being sharply questioned by a group of Teachers of the Law. Immediately on seeing Jesus, the multitude of people turned and ran towards him. They saluted him. Jesus could see at once that there was some vigorous discussion afoot.

'What are you arguing about with them?' he asked.

'Master,' answered a man in the crowd. 'I brought my son to you. He has a dumb daemon in him. Wherever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground. He foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth. He is pining away. I asked your disciples to drive the daemon out; but they failed.'

This man, like all the people of his day, thought that the disease which gripped his boy—in this case evidently epilepsy—was an evil spirit.

It was, indeed, a swift and abrupt descent from the shining wonder of the mountain-top to the baffled disciples grouped despondently around this epileptic boy.

'O weaklings in faith,' replied Jesus, 'how long must I be with you? How long must I have patience with you. Bring the boy to me.'

The boy fell into convulsions and rolled about on the ground, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the father, 'How long has he been like this?'

'From early childhood,' replied the man. 'Often it has thrown him into the fire or into pools of water to destroy him; but if you possibly can, do have pity on us and help us.'

' "If you possibly can!" ' exclaimed Jesus, 'why, everything is possible to him who has faith.'

Immediately the distracted father cried out to Jesus, with tears running down his face:

'I have faith; help my want of faith.'

As this was going on a great crowd swiftly gathered. People were running up from all sides.

Jesus, facing the boy with all his authority, said in a stern voice:

'Deaf and dumb spirit, it is I who command you; come out of him, and never enter into him again.'

With a loud shriek the boy writhed in a terrible struggle. Then all was silent. The boy lay there pale and still, while the crowd, hardly breathing, gazed at him.

'He is dead, he is dead,' they murmured.

Jesus stooped down and took hold of the boy's hand. His eyes opened. Jesus helped him to his feet. He stood there healed. The folk were astonished at the majesty of God.

Jesus turned then with his disciples and went into the home where they were staying at the moment. His disciples came to him privately.

'Why,' they asked, 'could we not drive it out?'

'Nothing can make this kind come out,' he replied, 'but prayer.'[1]

The Twelve with their Master now turned their backs on Mount Hermon and faced the south. They came again into their own land of Galilee, where once more they were under Herod's rule. Jesus led them by unfamiliar ways. He held back from teaching the people or speaking in the synagogues or healing. For he wanted to go on teaching his men in quiet places where he could give them some forward look into the future and try to prepare them for the great test that lay ahead.

'The Son of Man,' he taught them, 'will be betrayed into

[1] Some of the manuscripts add the words 'and fasting'.

the hands of men who will put him to death; but he will rise to life again.'

Every natural fibre in the Twelve leapt up in rebellion against the thought of Jesus dying a criminal's death. They loved him. It was agony to them to think that he should suffer and that they would lose him. They longed intensely that he should be hailed by the nation as the Christ, the Messiah of God's Kingdom. They were exceedingly distressed that instead of this he should be put to death. As to Jesus' saying that he would rise again, so far did it lie beyond their wildest thought that at the time it passed over their minds without really entering there. They heard the words; they recalled them afterwards when it had really happened; but at the time they simply could not grasp the thought. Yet such awe was upon them of the spirit of divine decision in Jesus' face, and of this strange destiny toward which he was leading them, that they dared not ask him.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE ARREST THAT FAILED

IT was early autumn as Jesus and the Twelve came down from the district of Caesarea Philippi through Galilee. The purple bloom was on the grapes in the vineyards on the terraced hill-sides. The figs grew daily more luscious in the orchards. A week or so later the vineyards began to be full of men and women busily gathering in the bunches of grapes to carry them to the presses. Amid the laughter and chatter of the workers, the juice crushed from these grapes ran from the wine-presses into great stone jars. The olives, picked from the grey, ancient trees, were thrown into the oil mills where the stone wheels revolved and crushed the kernels, so that streams of oil were drawn off into jars. The dark green figs were being dried in the hot September sun to be stored against the winter. This all led up to the Festival of Ingathering—or Harvest Thanksgiving—the Feast of Tabernacles as it was called.[1]

Jesus just before this Feast came again into his own country, but did not heal or teach the multitude, for he still concentrated on training his disciples for their task. The Jewish rulers in Jerusalem were now so stirred that they were watching their chance to get him killed. Jesus' brothers, James and the others, were going up to this Feast. They still did not believe in him. So they threw down a challenge.

'No one who wishes to be known publicly,' they said, 'acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, do them openly; show yourself openly to the world.'

They were right in that the Feast, which lasted for eight days, and to which countless thousands came from all lands where the Jews were dispersed, gave a splendid opportunity to a prophet of being recognized by the world. But the motive

[1] For description see Chapter VII.

'In the streets discussions went on about him.'

of Jesus' brothers was to jeer at him for wasting his time privately in the company of the Twelve instead of boldly facing the world.

'You go up to the Feast,' Jesus answered. 'My time is not yet.'

So the brothers went, leaving Jesus behind. When they reached Jerusalem they found the leaders of the Jews inquiring for him.

'Where is Jesus?' they asked. In the groups of Jews in the Temple and in the streets, in talk over their evening meals and under the night-sky on the roof-tops under the interlaced twigs of the Festival huts, hot discussions went on about him.

'He is a good man,' said many.

'No,' retorted others, 'he is leading the people astray.'

Meanwhile Jesus, who had not said that he would not attend the Feast, but only that he would come later, was quietly making his way southward from Galilee to Jerusalem. Three or four days of the Feast had gone by when he reached the city. Every housetop and open square, the slopes and crest of the whole Mount of Olives—all was hidden with booths made of leafy branches, so that this moving, many-coloured multitude from many lands could sleep in the open-air in memory of the days when the children of Israel slept in tents as they crossed the desert out of Egypt into this land.

So Jesus, when the Festival was already half over, at last went boldly up into the Temple. There, under the cedar-roof of the great covered colonnade, he began once more to teach the people his way of the Kingdom. Some of the Jerusalem people listening said to one another:

'Is not this the man they are wanting to kill? Yet here he is, speaking openly and boldly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the Rulers have actually found that this is the Christ? And yet that cannot be, for we know this man, and we know whence he comes; but as for the Christ, when he comes, no one can tell whence he is.'

Jesus heard this discussion and he answered:

'Yes, you know me, and you know whence I am. And yet I have not come of my own accord. There is One who has sent me, an Authority indeed, of whom you have no knowledge. I know him because I come from him, and he sent me.'

To say that he came from God seemed to the Rulers to be blasphemy. It stung them into still keener desire to arrest Jesus. They were faced, however, by a baffling obstacle. Large numbers of the pilgrims believed in Jesus.

'When the Christ comes,' they said, 'will he do greater works of healing than this teacher?'

So the Rulers of the Temple—the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas the High-Priest as its President—were afraid to arrest Jesus for fear of creating a riot, which would bring the Roman garrison out of the Tower of Antony to his rescue and destroy all chance of finally doing away with him.

The last day of the Feast came. Trumpets sounded at dawn. A priest came out of a gate that led from an underground corridor on the south of the Temple. He bore a pitcher of gold. Behind him a procession of people carried in the right hand twigs of myrtle and willow and a palm leaf, all tied together, and in the left hand a little branch of the lemon tree. They all marched down the steep terraced Roman road along the Tyropaeon valley till they reached the deep-walled Pool of Siloam, where the Tyropaeon and Kidron valleys meet. Mysterious waters flowed in strange gushes into this pool. An angel moved them, the people said. The waters came through an ancient tunnel cut over a thousand years before Jesus was born from the Fountain of Gihon[1] outside the city wall in the Kidron valley on the east through more than a thousand feet of rock till it issued on the other side of the hill inside the City wall. There the water ran into this oblong Pool of Siloam, hewn in the rock.[2]

[1] Now called the Virgin's Fount.

[2] And still flows to-day. The intermittent flow is evidently due to some siphon in the rock. But the gushes of water are irregular and cannot be

The white-robed priest stooped and filled his pitcher of gold to the brim with the sacred water. Then, turning, he and all the people climbed again up the steep ascent till they came to the Water-gate of the Temple. This gate took its name from this very ceremony. So the procession came up through the Temple courts towards the Holy Place. Stalwart attendants gave three blasts with long trumpets. This was a signal to the multitude that the man with the golden pitcher had entered the inner court. When he got there another priest joined him. He was bearing another pitcher filled, not with water, but with wine. So the two priests walked side by side up the slope into the Holy Place to the altar where silver funnels led down through the virgin rock to the hidden cave below. Lifting their pitchers, they poured out the offerings. The water of Siloam was poured into the western of the two funnels. This beautiful ceremony of Pouring the Water was intended to symbolize the outpouring of the Spirit of God. All the people shouted. The flutes began to play. The song of the great Hallel[1] was taken up with its responses.

That very morning the circle of Rabbis and priests of the Sanhedrin knit their brows in perplexity. Out there in the court of the Gentiles excited crowds were gathered round this Galilean prophet who was preaching the Kingdom of God, and whom the Sanhedrin wanted to stop.

But how could they come to grips with him? These crowds more than half believed that Jesus was the Coming

predicted. The women from the village of Siloam get their water here. It is the only spring of living water in Jerusalem. The author has waded through the tunnel from end to end. It was cut by masons, who began with hammer and chisel, from both ends as can clearly be seen and as described on a Hebrew inscription cut in Phoenician characters discovered in the tunnel and now in Constantinople Museum (the oldest Hebrew inscription in the world). After many windings, totalling over seventeen hundred feet, the masons met in the middle. The height of the tunnel varies from three to fourteen feet, but for a good part of the distance a man must stoop.

[1] Psalms cxiii to cxviii inclusive.

Prince. They were quite certain that he was a great new prophet. The situation was desperate. Excitement during the day might rise to white heat. They must act at once. Caiaphas called an officer.

'Go,' said the High-Priest, 'arrest Jesus the Nazarene and bring him here.'

Saluting and turning on his heels, the officer strode off and turned out the guard. 'Falling-in' his men, the officer marched them towards the crowd where Jesus was speaking. He was ordered to arrest an agitator. In his mind was no thought save to carry out his orders. As they came within earshot, the officer halted his men.

There, in the marble cloister, stood a young bearded man just over thirty, with no glint of fear in his courageous eyes, yet no hate or contempt. Around him men and youths with rapt faces were listening. Some were seated; others standing leant against the pillars in the shade. Talking in clear, strong tones that rang through the air, the words of the young Prophet reached the ears of the officer.

'Still for a short time I am with you,' said Jesus, 'and then I go my way to him that sent me. You will look for me and you will not find me, and where I am you cannot come.'

'Where is he going to?' some of the listeners asked. 'Will he go to foreign lands among the Dispersed Jews and teach the heathen?'

As Jesus was speaking the procession that we have just followed from the Pool of Siloam came up for the ceremony of the Pouring of the Water. It was the supreme hour of the Feast on the last day. While the water from the golden pitcher borne by the priest still moistened the altar and the people were still moved by the song of praise and the thought of the outpouring of the Spirit of God, Jesus, standing there in the Great Court of the Temple, cried aloud, speaking of himself as the true Water of Life, telling the world that in him the Spirit of God was in truth poured out.

'If anyone is athirst,' he said,
'Let him come to me and drink;
Out of his body
Streams of living water will flow.'

'This certainly is the Prophet' some in the crowd began to murmur.

'He is Christ,' said others.

The officer sent to arrest him stood there. The words that he heard struck chords that had never before sounded in his heart. Jesus himself, the power that radiated from him, the strength and simplicity and goodness that shone in every gesture and even in his stillness conquered the man. Jesus' words struck to the heart of the Temple police-officer as the very Voice of God speaking through human lips. What was the man to do? To lay hands on Jesus; to drag him to judgement and to prison—these were the orders of the High-Priest, his master. He had come to do that, just as he had done it many times before to rioters and rebels. Never in his life had he even thought of disobeying such an order. But this man! To lay hands on him! No, it was not possible. The officer gave his men a command. They turned and made their way back through the crowds to their masters. They stood at attention before the High-priest—but empty-handed.

'What!' cried Caiaphas, astounded. 'Why have you not brought him with you?'

'Never man spoke as he does,' came the amazing reply.

'What!' the Sanhedrin jeered, furious. 'Are you led away too? Look you; have any of the leaders or any of the Pharisees believed in him? As for this accursed crowd,' waving a hand at the mob in the open courtyard who were listening in rapt absorption to Jesus, 'it is ignorant. It knows nothing of the Law.'

The officer and his men had no answer to make to this. They only knew that they could not lay violent hands on one who radiated such goodness and power and who spoke as with the Voice of God.

Caiaphas and his father-in-law Annas burned with fury in their hearts. Nevertheless, they knew better than to court riot and rebellion by forcing the Temple-police in the face of a thrilled and almost worshipping multitude to go and drag Jesus to the Temple dungeon. For in an hour these hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in Jerusalem might have been inflamed into an uncontrollable uproar.

Caiaphas and the rest were still further maddened by the fact that suddenly one of their own number—a Pharisee—actually did stand up in defence of Jesus. In this Pharisee's mind was the recollection of a night when, seated with Jesus on a roof-top under the stars, with the breeze sweeping across the hills, he, too, had heard immortal words. Those strange words of the Temple-officer, 'Never man spoke as he does,' woke an echo in Nicodemus's memory. What were the words that he recalled?

'You must be born from above,' Jesus had said. 'The wind blows where it wills. You can hear its sound; but you cannot tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes. It is the same with every one who is born of the Spirit.' Then Nicodemus plucked up enough courage to speak.

'Surely,' he said, to his brother Pharisees and the Sadducees in the Sanhedrin, 'our Law does not condemn an accused man before hearing what he has to say and learning his offence.'

What Nicodemus said was, from the point of view of a Sanhedrin lawyer, unanswerable. But his jeering colleagues turned on him:

'Are you also from Galilee?' they sneered. 'Search and you will see that no prophet ever comes from Galilee.'

Nicodemus said no more. It was like him to have enough courage to raise his voice in protest, but not enough to press the matter to an issue. He had, two years ago, felt that Jesus was speaking God's truth, so he took his courage in both hands and went to see him—but in secret by night. He saw the truth in Jesus and he wanted to serve him, but kept

silent. Now, once more—having plucked up courage to speak—he lacked the daring to come fully into the open on Jesus' side, to break with all his friends, and shatter his own career as a distinguished Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. So Nicodemus, uneasy in conscience and sick at heart, was silent. When he next lifted his hand to help Jesus —he was too late.

CHAPTER XLV

THE YOUTH WHO SAW

THAT night, the last night of the Feast of Tabernacles, the great candelabra were lighted. Flaming torches were carried to and fro by the pilgrims. Slowly the lingering worshippers left the Temple; the torches were quenched; the glittering candles flickered out. The pilgrims walked home in darkness.

Jesus left the Temple too and went up on to the Mount of Olives as his habit was—to pray and to sleep.

When dawn came, passing the Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Ravine and climbing the steep stone street, he went up again to the Temple. He stood at the Treasury near the trumpet-shaped receivers into which the faithful threw their offerings. Not far away were the candelabra whose lights had flickered out. The sun's early morning rays were striking across the cloisters. The feeble candles had given place to the light that lightens the world.

The pilgrims gathered round Jesus. He said to them:

'I am the Light of the World. He who follows me will not walk in darkness. He will enjoy the light of life.'

'You are bearing witness to yourself,' sneered a group of Pharisees; 'your evidence goes for nothing.'

'Although I bear witness about myself,' Jesus replied, 'my evidence is nevertheless true. For I know whence I come and whither I go. You do not. There is my Father, too, who sent me. Why! In your own Law it is written that the evidence of two persons is valid. Very well, I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me, he bears witness too.'

'Ah, but where is your Father?' they retorted.

'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied, brushing aside the quibble. 'If you had known me, you would have known my Father too.'

'If you abide by what I say,' Jesus went on later, 'you are

'Passing the Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Ravine.'

This monument, which goes back at least to the time of Herod the Great, is the one structure still standing that Jesus saw. The body of the monument up to the architraves above the pillars is a monolith hewn from the rock itself.

really disciples of mine. You will understand the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

'Free,' they exclaimed, with scandalized pride. 'We are Abraham's descendants. We have never been slaves to anybody. What do you mean,' they angrily demanded, 'by saying "You will be free"?'

'Truly, truly, I tell you,' Jesus answered, 'every one who commits sin is a slave. The slave does not stay as a member of the home all the time; but the son of the house does. So if the Son sets you, as "slaves", free, then your freedom will be real.'

The Jewish leaders grew more and more petulant and bitter in a discussion in which their last words to him were to cry 'You are mad'. At last, completely losing their temper at his speaking of God as his Father, they dashed into the Court of the Gentiles to gather stones to hurl at him. For death by stoning was the Law's punishment of a blasphemer. As they went to get the stones Jesus seized the opportunity swiftly to mingle with the crowd that moved in the vast pillared court and, passing out of the Gateway, went through the city, across the ravine, and climbed the Mount of Olives.

After the Feast of Tabernacles was over, on a Sabbath day Jesus was walking along a street in Jerusalem. The place was quiet, for all the little shops were closed. The disciples pointed out a young fellow who was blind. Because he was blind and unable to earn his living, he sat with his hand stretched out, asking gifts from the passers-by.

The disciples knew about the youth and about his father and mother. They knew, indeed, that he had been born blind. Most men believed then that such a calamity was the result of sin—as, indeed, it often is.

'Rabbi,' said the disciples, turning to Jesus, and pointing to the youth, 'for whose sin was he born blind? Was it for his own or his parents'?'

'For neither,' replied Jesus; 'it was to let the works of God be shown in him.'

As he said this, Jesus spat on the earth. With the saliva he made a little clay. This he then took on his fingers and rubbed on to the youth's eyes.

'Go now,' he said to the blind fellow, 'and wash them in the Pool of Siloam.'

This was the pool from which the priest had on the last day of the Feast filled his golden jar of sacred water.

The blind young man was startled and bewildered. But hoping that something great might happen to him, he took his staff and tapped his stumbling way along the streets. He went down the steep, narrow bazaars that led from the high part of Jerusalem to the Pool of Siloam.[1] His heart was full of excitement. This young rabbi from Galilee, of whom he had heard so much, had rubbed this clay on his eyelids. Something in the voice that he had heard speak to him thrilled him with faith that he would see when he washed off the clay. So he went down the street as quickly as he could feel his way until he came to the Pool. At the south end of it the stream ran out over a short aqueduct to feed a lower pool and to water the beautiful terraced gardens on which the village of Siloam looked down from the opposite hill-side. He could hear the music of the water. If only he could see it!

Stooping down, with every nerve tingling, the blind lad scooped up some water from the Pool in his hand. Swiftly he washed the now dry clay from his eyes. He opened them. Wonder of wonders! There, for the first time in his young life, he saw the colour of the sunlight reflected in shimmering waters and glinting on marble columns, the olive faces of men, the dark hair and coloured tunics of boys; their movements as they walked; then the clear blue of the autumn sky, the shape of trees, and, greatest among the marvels of the world, the mountain of snow and gold above him crowning the majestic hill with glory—the Temple.

His heart beating with excited joy, he turned and swiftly climbed the steps. No tapping with his stick now; no hand

[1] See Chapter XLIV.

outstretched to beg. He reached his home. His face quivering with excitement, he cried:

'Father, mother, I can see!'

Neighbours came running up.

'Is not this the fellow who used to sit and beg?' said one.

'It is,' cried another.

'No,' said some—'yet it is like him.'

'I am he,' cried the youth.

'How were your eyes opened?' they asked.

'The man they call Jesus made some clay,' he replied, 'and rubbed it on my eyes and said to me "Go and wash them in the Pool of Siloam"; so off I went and washed them; and my sight came.'

'Where is he?' asked the neighbours.

'I don't know,' he replied.

'Come along to the rabbis,' said they.

So they walked along with him up to the Temple and went into the court where the Pharisee Rabbis were sitting, teaching. The excited people explained what had happened and the youth had to go through the same story all over again.

'How did you regain your sight?' they asked.

'He smeared clay on my eyes,' he answered shortly. 'I washed them. Now I can see.'

'This man is not from God,' some of them asserted. 'He doesn't keep the Sabbath.'

Others disagreed with this.

'How can he do such wonders if he is a sinner?' they demanded.

There was a hot debate on that point. They turned to the youth for his views.

'What do you say about him for opening your eyes?'

'I say he is a prophet,' he replied, without hesitation.

'It is all a mistake,' some of them said; 'this is not the man who was blind.'

'Go and fetch his father and mother,' someone suggested.

Soon the parents arrived.

'Is this your son?' the Pharisees asked—'your son who, you say, was born blind? How is it that now he can see?'

'We know that this is our son,' they answered, 'and that he was born blind. But how it comes about that he sees now we do not know; nor do we know who opened his eyes. He is of age.[1] Ask him; let him speak for himself.'

The poor couple were terrified of giving any answer about Jesus to the Sanhedrin because it had now been agreed among the Rabbis in Jerusalem that any man who believed that Jesus was the Messiah should at once be cut off the Synagogue roll and excommunicated. It was for this reason that the parents, pointing to their boy said: 'He is of age; ask him.'

So the Rabbis turned to the youth again.

'Give God the praise,' they said piously. 'We know perfectly well that this man is a sinner.'

With his heart bounding with his new-found happiness the young man blurted out:

'I don't know whether he is a sinner or not. One thing I do know: once I was blind, now I can see.'

This was so unanswerable and put them in such a quandary that the Rabbis started to ask the questions all over again in the hope of finding some way out of their dilemma.

'What did he do to you?' they asked. 'How did he open your eyes?'

At this the youth simply lost all patience.

'I have already told you that, but you wouldn't take it in,' he retorted. 'Why do you want to hear it all over again? Do you want to become his disciples?'

Furiously angry, they raved at him.

'You are his disciple,' they stormed. 'We are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses. As for this fellow, we do not know whence he comes.'

'Now that is astonishing,' replied the young fellow with

[1] This would mean that he was over thirteen, when a boy becomes a Son of the Law and responsible for himself.

cutting sarcasm, 'that you don't know whence he comes; yet he has opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to those who worship him and do his will. Was it ever heard since the world began that a man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.'

'Do not teach us,' they railed, furious at his impertinence; 'you who were wholly born in sin, out with you.'

So they drove him away and cut him off from membership in the synagogue. Jesus was told by a disciple who had listened to the whole discussion that they had done this. He at once set to work to find the youth.

'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'[1] asked Jesus.

'Sir, who is he?' he asked. 'Tell me so that I may believe in him.'

'You have seen him,' Jesus replied; 'he is in fact talking to you.'

'I believe,' cried the youth, and he threw himself down at Jesus' feet.

The boy's eyes were now fully open, the eyes of his mind and soul as well as of his body. He could now see not only the lovely world but the Lord of all its life.

To the people who were standing by, Jesus said:

'I am come for judgement, to make the sightless see and those who see blind.'

'Are we blind?' some Pharisees standing by challenged him.

'If you were blind, you would not be guilty,' he replied. 'As it is, you boast that you see; therefore your sin remains.'

There was great division over all this. A number of the people said:

'He is possessed: he is mad. Why listen to him?'

'This is not the talk of a madman,' replied others. 'Besides, can a daemon-possessed man open the eyes of the blind?'

[1] Some manuscripts say 'Son of God', others 'Son of Man'.

CHAPTER XLVI

SAMARITANS

OLD Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, was not daunted by the failure to arrest Jesus.[1] He set his subtle brain to spin new webs. Annas had held supreme power in the councils of his nation for over half a century; for as we have seen, when he was not himself high-priest he had so plotted and bribed that one or other of his sons or his son-in-law Caiaphas should be the President of the Sanhedrin. He was determined to end Jesus' life, for he saw and helped Caiaphas to see how fatal Jesus' claims and his teachings were bound to be to their rule.

Some time after this Feast of Tabernacles Jesus walked north again to Capernaum for a short time.

One day, when he was in the house, he noticed that his high-spirited young followers were arguing vehemently. Waiting for a convenient time, he called them together. They had been discussing which of them was the greatest, each claiming to be the chief.

Jesus called a little boy who was running about the house—it may have been Peter's own son. Jesus stood the boy by his knee and then said words that the Twelve never forgot.

'Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me,
And whoever receives me receives him that sent me.
For it is the lowliest of you who is great.'

They silently looked at the child, drinking in Jesus' teaching. Then John broke in with a story of something that had happened out in the town.

'Master', he said, 'we saw a man casting out daemons in your name; but we stopped him, because he is not a follower of ours.'

[1] See Chapter XLIV.

'Do not stop him,' said Jesus; 'he who is not against us is for us.'

Soon after this, in early December of that year,[1] Jesus and his men started out over the hills southwards and across the Plain of Esdraelon. Their aim was to go to another Feast at Jerusalem. They were walking by the direct route through Samaria. As they came towards the end of a long day's walk Jesus sent some of them on ahead to get lodging for the night in a Samaritan village. It was winter and a roof over one's head was needed. They met the headman or chief of the village.

'May we have lodging for the night in your village?' they asked. Seeing that they were not only Jews, whom he loathed, and from whom he had received many an insult, but were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate one of their accursed Festivals, the truculent Samaritan gave them for answer a flat, brusque 'No'.

'Be off out of our village,' he cried, angrily, the usual savage dog, half-wolf and half-hound, snarling at his side.

Just then Jesus reached the outskirts of the village. He met his men coming back crestfallen and angry at being spurned by the village. On hearing the news young James and John flew into a rage. We cannot wonder at it. Their beloved Master was on his way to face a host of foes at Jerusalem. He was tired. The last time he had passed through Samaria he had gone out of his way to lavish loving-kindness on the Samaritan people whom he had met. And here was this low half-breed heretic slamming the door of hospitality in their beloved Master's face. The hot-blooded young Galileans would soon teach the dogs to insult their Lord.

'Master', they cried, 'let us call down fire from heaven and burn them up!'

These youths knew the story of their nation. So they remembered that, just here in Samaria, the shaggy, leather-

[1] Probably A.D. 29.

girdled prophet Elijah had called down fire from heaven when the injured heretic King Ahaziah spurned Jehovah the God of the Jews and turned to Baalzebub for healing.[1] That was a fine precedent, thought young James and John.

Jesus' sense of dignity was different from that of the sons of Zebedee. It was tempered in the fire of love and the cool waters of patience. He refused to let tired body or strained nerve, wounded pride or race-contempt sting him into petulance. Jesus turned on his young followers, whom he had long ago nicknamed 'Sons of Thunder' (Boanerges) because of their hot temper.

'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of,' he said.

They went on to another village. Whether Jesus' rebuke led his messengers to go forward to the headman with a more courteous approach, or whether the folk were better-tempered, in any case they were received well and entertained as guests.

Having rested there they passed on towards Jerusalem. But the rough reception among the Samaritans made it seem wiser to go by a rather longer route in order to skirt the Samaritans' territory and not go through it. They turned, then, to the east and walked down along the borderland where the Samaritan frontier marched with that of the Jewish people. Jesus led the way through a gorge that runs east towards the Jordan Valley.

As they were on this road running along the winding side of a rocky precipitous ravine that divided the land of the Samaritans from that of the Jews they came to a remote hillside village. On the outskirts were ten men. They were outside the village because they all had a dreadful and contagious skin disease: leprosy was the name then used to cover a number of such sicknesses.[2] Nine of them were Jews; one was a Samaritan. Although the two races had no dealings with one another, yet, on this borderland of their

[1] 2 Kings i. 1–12.

[2] See again Note 6.

territories, the comradeship of their suffering and of their common need had brought them together.

Rumour had reached them from villages farther up the road that Jesus, whose wonderful deeds of healing every one spoke about, was on the road and would pass by that way. The thought broke in on them that he might be able to cleanse them from this awful disease. If he did that, they would not only be well—which would alone be heaven—but would also be able to go into their own homes and villages and live with their wives and boys and girls again.

So they waited together in a group by the road, but a good way off up the rocks. For the law insisted on their keeping at a distance from all their fellow men—even as much as a hundred feet if the breeze was blowing from the leper towards those who were well. As they saw Jesus and the Twelve coming along, they waited till he was alongside them, and then they lifted up their voices and called out loudly:

'Jesus, Master, have pity upon us.'

'Go,' Jesus called back to them, 'and show yourselves to the priests.'

No swifter way of saying that they should be healed can be imagined. For the Law said that a man who was a leper and was healed must, as the first step before going to live with his folk again, go to the priests to be examined by them and certified as pure from leprosy, being sprinkled with pure, spring water. The men turned at once to go to the priests. This did not necessarily mean going all the way to Jerusalem. The thousands of priests who served in the Temple at Jerusalem did so in relays. So a priest might live in his native village or town for a great part of the year.

Off they started at once in obedience to Jesus' voice. As they moved off they were filled with joy beyond words as they felt health come tingling in their veins and saw their scaly, discoloured skin come smooth and clean. One of them, as he looked at himself and trembled with joy, was smitten with a sudden glow of gratitude. To say 'Thank you' to

Jesus who had made this wonderful gift of new health—that he must do, even before he saw the priest. He turned in his tracks and came coursing back along the road, crying in a loud voice in his happy excitement:

'Glory to God! Glory to God!' He ran to Jesus; he threw himself down in the road at his feet.

'Master, I thank you,' he cried, his eyes shining, his face radiant, his heart full of gladness and gratitude.

Jesus, looking down at the man, saw that this was the one of the ten who was a Samaritan. He turned to the Twelve.

'Were not all ten of them cleansed?' he asked. 'But where are the other nine? Was there no one to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?'

Then he turned to look at the Samaritan at his feet. 'Get up and go,' he said, 'your faith has made you well.'

As the Sons of Thunder looked at this Samaritan and then along the road at the backs of the nine thoughtless men of their own race who were walking eagerly away wrapped up in their own well-being they had food for thought. They had wanted to burn a Samaritan village. They could not but see that it is both stupid and wicked to judge any nation or race as a whole by what some of its truculent or vicious individuals do.

As Jesus and his disciples and other pilgrims with them went on their way towards Jerusalem, one man was so fascinated by Jesus' manhood, so strongly gripped by the power that was in him, and by his teaching, that he said: 'I will follow you anywhere.'

> 'The foxes,' Jesus answered, 'have their holes,
> The wild birds have their nests;
> But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Jesus at this time made stern demands on men who wished to join with him and become his disciples. He knew that with Herod's threat over him, and with the steady plotting determination of the Temple authorities against him, two things

'Having put his hand to the plough.'

were certain. The first was that he and his followers must live a strenuous and dangerous life; the second, that before very long a great storm would break on them. A follower who was half-hearted would be blown aside like chaff. Rock alone would stand the storm.

'I will follow you, Lord,' another man said to him at that time. 'But first let me go and say "Good-bye" to my people at home.'

Jesus in an instant could foresee what would happen. The man's relatives would crowd round him and put every pressure upon him to dissuade him from throwing in his lot with this poor, wandering, revolutionary prophet.

'No one,' he answered the man, pointing as he did so to the peasant in his field who that winter day was ploughing up the stubble and kept his eyes concentrated ahead so that he could avoid smashing his plough by striking this boulder and that tree-root with his share, 'no one is of any use to the Kingdom of God who having put his hand to the plough looks behind him.'

'Lord', said another who was eager to follow him, 'Let me first bury my father.'

Jesus' reply to him was very firm.

'Let the dead bury their dead', he said.

This, however, is not a harsh and unfeeling saying, as might appear at first sight; for the meaning of the man's request was not that his father was dead and he wished to be at home for the funeral. The request meant that he should go on living at home for his father's lifetime.

They now plunged down into the rift of the Jordan which was hidden in the deep terraced valley on their left. Keeping well to the west of the river, and walking parallel with it southwards towards the Dead Sea, Jesus came one evening in sight of Jericho. Many discussions went on as they walked along this way. A glimpse of one of them comes in a picture of a Pharisee pilgrim travelling along who got into talk with Jesus. He asked Jesus what every Jew in the world in

those days who believed in God and in his own nation wanted to know.

'When is the Kingdom of God coming?'

'The Kingdom of God,' answered Jesus, 'is not coming in the way that you hope to see it. No one will say "Here it is," or "There it is." For the Kingdom of God is now in your midst.'

Leaving Jericho next day they turned westward and started to climb the stony road up the broken hills towards Jerusalem. Jesus was confronted on this road by a Teacher of the Law. The Lawyer wanted to test Jesus.

'Rabbi,' he asked, 'what am I to do to inherit eternal life?'

Jesus, seeing that he was a Lawyer, turned to him and asked him, as an expert, to give his own answer.

'What is written in the Law?' Jesus asked. 'What do you read there?'

' "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole strength, and with your whole mind," ' quoted the Lawyer, 'also,' he went on, ' "your neighbour as yourself." '

'You have given the right reply,' Jesus said. 'Do that and you shall live.'

Wishing, however, to make an excuse for himself, the Lawyer went on to ask, 'But who is my neighbour?'

It was a clever question. The Lawyer knew and Jesus knew that in the original—the Law from which they had quoted—'neighbour' meant 'fellow citizen of the Jewish nation'. The rule from which the lawyer had just quoted runs in full as follows:[1]

'You shall not cherish hate against your fellow-countrymen; you must warn him of his fault, so that you do not incur guilt yourself. You must not avenge yourself; you shall not bear a grudge against your *fellow-citizen*, but love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

[1] Leviticus xix. 17–18.

In that sense of a 'fellow-citizen' the Roman soldier or the Greek merchant, the Arab raider or the Egyptian camel-caravaner was not the Jewish Lawyer's neighbour. Yet a little farther on, in the same part of the Scroll, the Law makes even some foreigners neighbours. For it says:

'The foreigner who settles beside you must be treated like a native, and you must love him as you love yourself; for you were foreigners yourselves in the land of Egypt.'[1]

Jesus set out to ask the Lawyer another question—about this 'neighbour' problem. Before doing so he told him a story, a perfect story, painted with the strong, sensitive strokes of a master artist.

The scene of the story was that very road on which they walked. It drops three thousand two hundred and fifty feet in twenty-two miles. It runs from the Mount of Olives—which is over two thousand four hundred feet above sea-level—to Jericho, over eight hundred feet below sea-level. Half-way along that road, where there has been time out of mind a caravanserai, are the deep savage gorges and the mountain called at that time by the Greeks 'the Red Mountain' because of the blood shed there by robbers.

'A man,' said Jesus, 'going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and then ran off, leaving him half dead. It happened that a priest came down the same road; but when he saw the man he went past on the other side. A Levite, too, who came by that place, did the same; he looked at him but went past on the other side.

'A Samaritan traveller, however, came to where he was and felt sorry for him when he saw him. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine into them. Then, lifting him on to the back of his own beast, he took him to an inn and there tended him carefully. On the following morning he took out two shillings and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and if you incur any further expense, I will pay you when I come back."'

[1] Leviticus xix. 34.

'Which of these three', asked Jesus, 'was neighbour to him that fell by the wayside.'

Jesus' story was full of severe shocks for the Lawyer, more severe than we can easily grasp. It was startling, first of all, that the men who did not obey the Law of the Kingdom of God were the very men whose official duty and profession it was to interpret that Law and to lead the worship of God himself in the Temple—the Priest and the Levite. These were the people who, in Jesus' story, broke the greatest of all God's Laws—of loving your neighbour. It was a still more startling shock, secondly, that the man who did obey the Law of the Kingdom was an alien—a man belonging to a nation not only detested as traitors and heretics but loathed as having polluted Jewish arteries with Babylonian blood. Did James and John look at each other as Jesus spoke, recalling how they had wanted to smite with forked lightning the inhospitable Samaritans?

The Lawyer answered Jesus' question honestly:

'The man who took pity on him.'

'Go,' said Jesus, 'and do likewise.'

They walked on up that long, steep, winding way, and tired with the long climb they came, before Jerusalem was in sight, to a village called Bethany, on the east side of the Mount of Olives, three-quarters of a mile from the city. Two sisters, friends of Jesus, welcomed him into their little home. Their names were Martha and Mary. They were not rich, so they had no servants to help in the house.

That evening, when they were going to have their supper, Mary sat near Jesus' feet, so that she could listen to all that he said. Martha bustled to and fro. She was cooking special dishes for their guest and preparing the table for the meal. She became flurried and worried with the effort of her hospitality. To see Mary sitting talking with Jesus got on her nerves. So she stopped for a second and asked querulously:

'Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the meal single-handed?'

'Martha, Martha,' Jesus answered, 'Mary has chosen the best dish, and she shall not be drawn away from it.'

The simplest food, the plainest table was enough where there was the best of all fare,—the talk and silence of friends who love one another. He knew, too, that soon they would not be able to enjoy this loveliest thing that the world can give —the friendly talk of comrades—and that when he was gone the sisters would no longer see his face nor hear his voice in their home.

CHAPTER XLVII

BANDITS AND SHEPHERDS

JESUS had come up to the city to the Feast of the Dedication. Leaving Bethany in the morning Jesus walked across the crest. The road wound through the saddle in the Mount of Olives that is justly named 'the Bottle of the Winds'. It was mid-winter. At that time of year cold winds blow across these heights and often rain sweeps over the city. Jesus during this Feast of the Dedication[1] walked and talked inside the Temple, under the shelter of the great colonnades called Solomon's Porch.

The leaders in the Temple were greatly perplexed. What could they do to stop Jesus from his work? They saw how great an impression he was making on the crowds of pilgrims. They could not deny his power to heal. For they had, for instance, seen it at work not three months earlier when he healed the blind youth.[2] Their very exasperation when they cross-examined and then expelled that youth was, in part, the explosion of their own hatred of Jesus' aims warring with unwilling recognition of his power. They gathered now round him in the aisle of Solomon's cloister and said:

'How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us frankly.'

'I have told you,' Jesus replied, 'but you do not believe me. The things that I am doing in my Father's name witness for me. But you do not believe me, because you are not of my flock. My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me. Nor,' he warned them, 'shall any one snatch them out of my hands.'

[1] For description of the Feast of the Dedication see Chapter VII. Its date is about 25 December, that of Christmas of Western Christendom. The order of events in this chapter is based on the conviction that John x. 19–29 was originally at the end of his chapter ix. The sequence of sense is thus maintained.

[2] Chapter XLV.

They did not ask the question about Jesus being the Christ with any idea of believing in him, if he said that he was. What they wanted was to get him to say something that would make him at one and the same time guilty of blasphemy before their Jewish Law and of rebellion against Rome. The best of all things possible would be that he should claim—there in Jerusalem—to be the Messiah of a new Kingdom. The claim to be King there would mean, in face of the Procurator, Pilate, rebellion; in face of the Law of Moses it was blasphemy. So they asked him point-blank 'Are you the Christ'?

His answer—as we have seen—was quite straightforward; but it gave them nothing with which they could charge him before Pilate or the Sanhedrin. They were baffled.

He looked into the faces of the false shepherds of the flock of Israel—the nation of the Jews. He looked at the multitude. He saw the pilgrims being fleeced of their money by the profiteering merchants in the Temple Courts, and pouring wealth into the coffers of Annas and his sons and son-in-law, yet receiving no help for their spiritual lives in return. The burning anger of Ezekiel again came back to Jesus. Those scathing word-pictures of the scattered, driven sheep, worried by wolves and starved by their own shepherds, who got fat on the flesh of the sheep and warmed their sleek bodies with the wool, and of God's anger with them, were often in his mind.

> Woe be to the shepherds of Israel . . .
> You eat the fat,
> You clothe yourselves with the wool . . .
> But you do not feed the flock.[1]

Jesus thought of the sheep on the hills of his native land, of each sheep following the shepherd that he knew—the shepherd who cares for the sheep and who leads his flock down from the hills where the grass has withered to the banks of

[1] Ezekiel xxxiv. 2, 3.

the ravine where there is moisture in the soil, and so still farther down the valley to the well, where the shepherd lets down a bucket into the well again and again to fill the trough with water that the sheep may drink.

Jesus recalled how, as the shadows lengthen, the shepherds call their sheep, and if some are wandering in the wrong direction call them by name. So, turning homeward, the shepherd strides ahead and the sheep come trotting after, till at last they reach the round wall of unhewn, unmortared stone, and the sheep and lambs run in through the entrance. Inside is no grass and no water, but there is security. Wrapped in his warm, light burnous of wool the shepherd curls himself up in the door—the hole in the stone wall—to protect the sheep. The shepherd is the door.

When travelling through the land Jesus at night heard on the hills a yell rise like the maniacal laughter of demons; then another and another. Low, creeping forms slunk stealthily along among the boulders. The jackals were out, hungry for lambs. A lamb that, having heard its shepherd's voice calling, disobeyed and went on nibbling the grass till darkness fell would quiver with dread as it heard those yells and saw those creeping forms, for death at the jaws of a wild beast was certain. But the wild beast, whether the small, deadly jackal, the greater, snarling hyena, or the wolf, could not touch the lamb safe under the shepherd's protection in the fold. For between the beasts and the flock lay the body of the shepherd, who was ready even to give his life for the sheep.

Up in the hills were brigands, robber groups, who crept stealthily across and tried to climb over the wall into the fold to steal a sheep. Sometimes a shepherd, seeing them coming and fighting to defend his sheep from death, would himself be killed, giving his life for the sheep. With the shepherd on guard, however, the sheep can rest securely till at dawn the last jackal steals silently like a shadow to its lair. Then the shepherd rises and, calling his own

'When he has his own sheep, he goes in front of them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.'

sheep by name from the others in the fold, goes before them and leads them to fresh grazing grounds.

Jesus saw in Ezekiel's pictures a true vision of Annas and Caiaphas and the rulers in the Temple as they fleeced the Jewish people. He saw in the other pictures a symbol of the people and himself. And it was a picture that every boy among the pilgrims could understand, for it was a part of their everyday life.

So Jesus went on to put the two sets of pictures into one parable.

'Truly, truly, I tell you,' said Jesus, 'he who does not go into the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up over the wall, is a thief and a robber. He who goes in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens to him and the sheep hear his voice.

'He calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. When he has got his own sheep, he goes in front of them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but will run away, because they do not know the stranger's voice.'

All who were sitting round in the marble court of the Temple knew as clearly as possible that this was what happened every day on the hills. What they could not grasp was what it meant in relation to themselves and Jesus. So he explained it.

'Truly, truly, I tell you,' said Jesus, 'I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door; if any man comes in by me he will be safe and will go in and go out, and will find pasture. The thief only comes to steal and kill. I am come so that they may have life and may have it to the full.

'I am the true, the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man and not a shepherd, one to whom the sheep do not belong, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs; then the wolf snaps and bites

at them and chases them hither and thither. He runs because he is a hired man and does not care for the sheep.

'I am the good shepherd; and I know my own sheep and am known by them, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

'I have other sheep, too. They do not belong to this fold. I must bring them as well. They will listen to my voice. So they will become one flock, one shepherd.

'That,' he went on, 'is why my Father loves me, because I lay down my life to take it up again; I have my Father's orders for this. I and my Father are one.'

This seemed to the Temple leaders sheer blasphemy. They caught up some stones to carry out the orders of the Law that a blasphemer should be stoned to death. If they had hurled their stones, Jesus would have been killed. He did not flinch.

'I have done before you many a good deed of my Father,' said Jesus, facing them squarely, 'for which of them would you stone me?'

'It is not for any good deed that we mean to stone you,' they cried menacingly, 'but for blasphemy; because you, who are only a man, make yourself out to be God.'

'If I am not doing the deeds of my Father,' replied Jesus, 'do not believe me. But if I am doing it, even though you will not believe me, believe what I do—so that you may grasp and learn to understand more clearly that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.'

Again they made for him to arrest him; but escaping into the moving multitude of pilgrims Jesus eluded them and, leaving the Temple, went again out down the ravine, over the Mount of Olives and away from Jerusalem eastwards again, across the Jordan.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE LORD OF LIFE

JESUS, in the deep rift of the Jordan valley, spent some time that winter, after the December Feast of the Dedication, by the river at Bethabara, the House of the Ford on the Peraean—or Eastern—bank. He was at the very place where, as he had come up out of the waters, the Voice of God had told him in his inmost spirit:

> 'Thou art my Son
> In whom I am well pleased.'

He strengthened himself in his spirit there after the hate and the attempted stoning in the Temple by the recollection of that Voice. He taught his men and the folk who came to him the Good News of the Kingdom.

All the time, however, in his mind one great thought was working. For a full year the anger of the Temple authorities —and at their head Caiaphas and Annas—had been getting fiercer and more menacing. In a few months, at the Passover, this very spring,[1] the great crisis was bound to break upon him. To prepare for that was the central work left to him to do. One day, as Jesus was with his companions on the river bank teaching, a breathless messenger came splashing across the ford. He had come post-haste down the hill-tracks for two days from the village of Bethany close by Jerusalem.

'The sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, have sent me to tell you that their brother, whom you love, is ill.'

Jesus saw that to go to Lazarus to heal him meant conflict with the leaders in the Temple at Jerusalem, for the Holy City was a bare mile from Bethany. Jesus did not at once do as the messenger asked. On the contrary he stayed there by the river-bank teaching. His men thought that this was because he wanted to avoid touch with the city where he

[1] Probably A.D. 30.

had so recently only just escaped death by stoning. They themselves were sure that that was the right thing to do. It might seem heartless to let Mary and Martha, his close friends, suffer like that without him; but—the Twelve thought—what else could he do.

He was planning something so daring that, when the Twelve heard it, it took their breath away. He was going to do a deed that would sweep away the last mists between himself and his enemies and show up in battle-array the clash between himself and the High-Priests—the war against God's infinite love waged by the grim, cold selfishness and narrow, hard pride of the Temple leaders.

How their hate of him had grown! As recently as last summer, when Jesus, at the Grain-Harvest Festival, the Feast of Pentecost, had healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda, the leaders had railed at him for showing healing love on the Sabbath.[1] In the autumn at the Fruit-Harvest Festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, when he gave sight to the blind youth, their exasperation had broken on the young man as well as on his healer.[2] For the lad's worship of Jesus gave them too vivid a picture of how men were being drawn to Jesus as against themselves. Only a few weeks ago, in midwinter, at the most recent Festival, where Jesus, at the Feast of Lights, had started to speak of himself as the Good Shepherd doing the works of his Father, their rage had burst all bounds, and they had gone the horrible length of starting to stone him to death.[3] What would they do if Jesus now at their very doors worked the greatest of all his deeds that would show the power of God—the Source of all Life—not only over disease, but over death?

Jesus then, suddenly, two days after the messenger had come from Martha and Mary, told the Twelve that he had decided to go up to Bethany.

'Master,' cried his dismayed disciples, 'only the other day the Jews were trying to stone you. Are you going back there?'

[1] Chapter XLI. [2] Chapter XLV. [3] Chapter XLVII.

'Are there not twelve hours in the day?' Jesus answered. This was a common proverb, meaning that, so long as God has anything for a man to do here, he is immortal.

'Our friend Lazarus,' Jesus went on, 'has fallen asleep; I am going to wake him up.'

'But, Lord,' they exclaimed, taking Jesus literally, 'if he is getting some sleep he will get better.'

'Lazarus is dead,' Jesus explained, 'and,' he added, 'for your sakes I am glad I was not there, that you may believe.'

The disciples looked at each other in dismay. Their experience of what the Rulers in Jerusalem had done and were planning made them convinced that this journey would end in tragedy. One of them, Thomas the Twin, a man who looked at facts with open, unflinching eyes, turned to the bewildered group, and with blended despair and courage cried:

'Come on, let us go too; let us die along with him.'

So they climbed the three thousand feet up the hills of Judaea from the Jordan valley. At last the square little houses of the village of Bethany came in sight round a bend in the track. Jesus sat and waited. One of them went ahead to tell the sisters that he had come. Mary, the more emotional of the two—the tragedy of whose life before Jesus saved it was that she had let her passions rule her—broken with grief, could not bring herself to move from the shelter of the house. Martha, the practical and self-possessed energetic sister, stood erect and went out to meet Jesus. Keeping calm, she still could not but let Jesus know her sorrow at his delay.

'Had you been here, Lord,' she cried, 'my brother would not have died. But now I know that God will give you anything that you ask.'

'Your brother will rise again,' said Jesus.

'I know,' answered Martha, naturally taking it that he spoke of the life to come, 'that he will rise at the resurrection on the last day.'

'I myself,' answered Jesus, 'am resurrection and life. A man who believes in me will live even if he dies, and no one

who lives and believes in me will ever die. Do you believe that?' he asked her.

'Yes, Lord,' she answered, 'I do believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.'

With that she turned and hurried up the track through the village. There were a number of friends there in the house from Jerusalem—Jews who knew the family and had come out to sit with the sisters and mourn with them for the death of Lazarus. Martha went into the house and stooping, so that these visitors should not hear, she whispered to Mary:

'The Master is here: he is asking for you.'

Pulling herself together at these words, Mary rose and left the house. She ran swiftly towards Jesus, who stayed at the spot outside the village where Martha had left him. The friends, thinking that Mary was going to wail at her brother's tomb as Eastern women do, followed her. In her heart was the same thought that had burned in Martha's breast. Where, however, Martha had stood erect and calm, Mary threw herself on the ground at Jesus' feet and with convulsive sobs cried:

'Had you been here, Lord, my brother would not have died.'

Jesus was stirred to the depths by her grief. His spirit chafed at the long-drawn wailing of the friends.

'Where have you laid him?' he asked.

'Come and see, sir,' they said.

Jesus burst into tears.

'Look,' said some of the friends from Jerusalem, 'see how he loved him.'

'Yes,' retorted others, 'but when he could open a blind man's eyes, as he did in Jerusalem, could he not have prevented Lazarus from dying?'

Jesus heard this argument being bandied to and fro. It troubled his spirit. He went with Martha and Mary to the tomb—a cave cut in the hill-side with a stone shelf carved in it for the body, and a hewn boulder rolled against the entrance.

'Remove the boulder,' said Jesus.

'But, Lord,' remonstrated the practical Martha, 'he will be rotting by this time. Why, he has been dead four days.'

'Did I not tell you,' Jesus said, turning to her, 'that if you will only believe, you shall see the glory of God?'

Some men at this set their shoulders to the stone and with a heave rolled it aside, so that the mouth of the cave was now open. Then Jesus, having lifted his face to speak with God, called out, with a loud cry:

'Lazarus, come out!'

The onlookers gasped in amazement as they saw the dim, white, swathed figure that lay inside the cave-tomb rise and —all hampered as he was by the bandages around his feet and his hands and with his face hidden in a towel—move towards them.

'Untie him,' cried Jesus. 'Let him move.'

No words can say what overwhelming happiness thrilled in Martha and Mary as their brother Lazarus alive and well caught them in his arms. Jesus, who loved all three of them with a strong, deep love, was full of joy. Some of the friends from Jerusalem, moved to the depths by this deed in which the very Breath of God had given not simply healing but new life to Lazarus, were convinced by this that Jesus was the Christ. They saw that he was the Lord of Life.

Others, however, coursed off over the ridge of the Mount of Olives and across the Kidron into the city and the Temple to tell the Leaders what Jesus had done. The Sanhedrin had thought that for the time being, at any rate, they were well quit of him. Now here, suddenly, he had appeared and had eclipsed all his earlier deeds in a way that would rally the pilgrims to him as the Messiah at the Passover, which was now not far distant.

Caiaphas hurriedly called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

'Whatever are we to do?' murmured they to one another, when Caiaphas reported why he had called them together. 'The fellow is doing many wonders. If we let him go on like

this everybody will believe in him. Then the Romans will come in and suppress the Holy Place and our nation.'

'You know nothing at all,' snapped Caiaphas from the chair, sternly breaking in on their futile babble. 'You do not grasp that it is to your own interest that one man should die for the people, rather than that the whole nation should be destroyed.'

This strong line was agreed to. There was—Caiaphas saw it and so did they now—no compromise possible. They set to work to shape plans to kill Jesus. This they might have done at once without much danger of riot if they could have got him out of the way quietly when there were—as at that time—no pilgrims about. This, however, was not in Jesus' plan. So he took swift farewell of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, and leaving the happy little re-united home in Bethany he with his men made for the hard high tracks that climb off the main routes over the ridges of the Wilderness of Beth-aven. In a high coign among the hills he settled for a short time in a village that gazes right over the Jordan Valley to the hills of Peraea—a country-town called Ephraim.

CHAPTER XLIX

STORIES OF THE KINGDOM

AT some time in the earliest months of this year[1] Jesus went down with his men from the Judaean hills across the river to Peraea. In the villages and cities, the sheepfolds and orchards, of that beautiful country, he planned to teach his men and to do his work. Among the people east of the Jordan he was beyond reach of Caiaphas' hand. He was to stay there till the full springtime. Then and not till then he planned to go direct to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover and make his final challenge to the Rulers.

When he started to Peraea some of the relatives of his disciples decided to go with him. John and James, for instance, took their mother, Salome, the wife of Zebedee.

In this land of Transjordania the Yarmuk river runs in a deep, winding valley, not far below the south end of the Lake of Galilee and only a few miles above Bethabara. Fed by springs in the hills that watered the flocks and supplied the noble cities on the hills it brawls over boulders. Crossing and mounting that Yarmuk valley, Jesus and his disciples saw the river cascading down glittering falls, and then forming a cool, deep pool where sheep drank and where the Twelve and their Master took rest. So the river tumbles on in happy, noisy abundance into the deep, silent Jordan.

Jesus with the Twelve now had their faces turned towards the land called Decapolis, where the ten Greek cities were leagued together. On their left above the Yarmuk the Twelve could see the Greek city of Gadara, with its amphitheatre and the long, paved street crowned by its triumphal arch. Gadara was dominated by its Acropolis, ringed with marble temples. Scattered on the surrounding heights were Roman

[1] Probably A.D. 30.

villas. On the highest slopes facing west the Roman legions camped.

Jesus and his men climbed out of that valley by winding paths till they were nearly three thousand feet above the Jordan and two thousand above sea-level. The close heats of the Jordan valley fell away. They felt afresh how right the Romans were to give to that land east of Jordan the name of 'Palestina Salutaris'.

The breeze on that plateau of Transjordania or Peraea blew across the high, rolling, grazing land. There they saw boys and men, some on horseback, and all armed with spears, guarding thousands of camels feeding, while the comic colts loped clumsily around their haughty mothers. As Jesus and his men moved southwards they saw hillsides alive with flocks of sheep. This land had, as Jesus knew from the Scrolls that were read in the synagogue, always been rich in sheep, for Moses had, in the hills to the south, captured as spoil from Midian half a million sheep as well as seventy thousand cattle and almost as many asses. Deborah, too, in her immortal song, had jeered bitterly at Reuben that he would not cross the Jordan from Peraea to Canaan 'to help the Lord against the mighty' because he preferred to

> . . . abide among the sheep hurdles,
> To listen to the bleating of the flocks.

Even among those Greek cities Jesus met Jews at every step. They had always lived in its rich pastures, but until the Roman rule came had never been able to build strong cities because it was open to the desert raids of the Arab—the Midianite, as he was then called. From the days when Moses fought his last battle against Midian to the fearful struggle in which Gideon drove back those Arab sheikhs—the Ishmaelites and the Midianites—'the children of the East' were always swarming west from the desert to these rich, fruitful lands. Only because Rome's long, strong

'They saw the men chaffering and arguing in the Forum.'

The Forum at Gerasa (Jerash), one of the Decapolis cities in Transjordania. The paved street stretches out of sight for a mile with beautiful buildings on either side. (The photograph is taken from a tower of a Greek theatre.)

sword-arm and shield and javelin held the Arab at bay could those lovely Greek cities be built and thrive there.[1]

Jesus' way lay south. Four of the ten Greek cities—Pella, Philadelphia, Dion, Gerasa—lay along this southern road that struck south-east over the hills of Gilead. He cannot have failed to go by some of the cities on that route. Peter, John, and the others in the marble-colonnaded street where the chariots wore ruts in the square basalt blocks saw the men chaffering and arguing in the Forum. The crowds were massed in the afternoon in the vast theatres facing north and west across the superb country. Temples reared their loveliness. There were temples, for instance, to Zeus, the highest of the gods; to Dionysius and the sensual Astarte; to Hercules, to Bacchus, and to Diana.

Jesus talked with his men and told them stories by which he sowed Truth that grows, immortally fresh and young, centuries after the last Roman sentinel crept back from the broken ramparts, and lovelier as art than any of the words written by Greek philosophers or than the temples built in those now long-deserted cities.[2]

In one city, for instance, a leading Jew, a ruler who was also a Pharisee, asked Jesus to his home on the Sabbath day for a meal. A sick man came in at the courtyard gate. His body was swollen with dropsy. Jesus knew what was in the minds of the other guests—Pharisees and Lawyers—who here, as everywhere, disliked his teaching. So he squarely faced them at once with the criticism they would hurl at him if he healed the man.

'Is it right to heal on the Sabbath?' Jesus challenged his host and the other guests, 'or is it not?'

They were cowards. They dared not say either 'Yes' or

[1] The same situation in relation to the desert Arab faces the French and British mandatory governments in this area to-day.

[2] Most of these stories are reported by Luke only from an unknown source. Luke did not know, nor can any one now tell exactly at what place or when or in what precise order Jesus told the stories. These things matter little. The stories and their meaning are the great thing.

'No'. They kept silence. Jesus laid his hands on the man and cured him and sent him off.

'Which of you,' Jesus challenged them, looking round at the group, 'when a son or an ox has fallen into a water-tank on the Sabbath will not pull him out?'

They could not dispute this. They just treasured the incident up to use against him when the chance should come. Jesus then turned the tables upon the folk at the dinner who had been spying on him so critically. He had noticed how the guests manœuvred to get the best places.

'When any one invites you to a wedding banquet,' he said, 'do not go and recline on the best couch, lest a more honoured guest than yourself has been invited. Then the host will come to you and say "Make room for this guest," and you shamefacedly will go creeping down to the lowest place. No, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place; then, when your host comes round, he may say to you: "My friend, come up higher!"—which will be doing you honour in the presence of all the other guests.

> 'For whoever uplifts himself will be humbled,
> And he who humbles himself will be uplifted.'

Turning to his complacent host, the proud ruler of the synagogue, Jesus startled him with some advice.

'When you give a dinner or a supper,' he said, 'do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or rich neighbours, that they may invite you in return, and so you will be paid back. When you entertain, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. You will be blessed then, because they have no means of paying you back, but you will be rewarded at the resurrection of the just.'

It may well have been at this time that Jesus said the great words that fit this story so well, but which no one of his four biographers tell us—words which Paul of Tarsus, the Pharisee who afterwards became the greatest of all his messengers, quotes from Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

One of the guests when he heard Jesus' advice to the host ejaculated: 'Happy is he who goes to feast in the Kingdom of God!'

'A man once gave a great dinner,' Jesus said to him, taking up this idea, 'to which he invited a large number of guests. At dinner time he sent his servant round to tell the guests: "Come, for all things are now ready." One and all, however, began to excuse themselves. "I have bought a piece of land," said the first, "and I must go and look at it. Please hold me excused." "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to try them," a second pleaded. "Please hold me excused." Another said: "I am just married. It isn't possible for me to come."

'The servant came and reported these replies to his master. He was enraged and said to the servant:

' "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the town. You will see poor folk, cripples, blind, lame: fetch them all in here."

'Soon the servant reported: "Sir, your order has been carried out and there is room still."

' "Go out," said the master, "into the highways and hedgerows and insist on the people coming in. Fill up my house. For I tell you that not one of those who were invited shall taste my dinner." '

The time of the Passover was now coming near. Jesus moved on again, followed by large crowds of pilgrims who attached themselves to him and meant to go all the way with him to Jerusalem to the Feast. He stopped and turned to the crowd to warn them that they must very fully count the cost of going with him.

'If any one comes to me,' he said, 'and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me, he cannot be a disciple.'

In telling them to count the cost before they decided to

throw in their lot with him, Jesus evidently brought out of his home-memories in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth the recollection of some foolish man who had come to Joseph with a building contract and then could not carry it out.

'Which of you,' he said, 'wanting to build a tower does not sit down first and figure out the cost, to see if he has enough money to finish it, lest, possibly, when he has laid the foundation and cannot complete the building, the onlookers begin to make fun of him, laughing: "This fellow began to build, but could not complete it." Or what king, setting out to fight another king, does not first sit down and work out whether he can with ten thousand men come off victorious against him who has twenty thousand men. If he cannot, while the other is still a long way off, he sends envoys to ask for peace. In the same way,' concluded Jesus, 'no one of you who will not part with all he holds to can be a disciple of mine.'

Among the most eager people to hear Jesus were sinners—folk who were known to break the commandments—others were the hated tax-collectors. Jesus went to the houses of such people when they invited him to dinner. The religious people, the Pharisees and the Scribes, were annoyed at this.

'Look,' they complained, 'he welcomes bad men and even joins them at their meals.'

Jesus heard what they were grumbling about and turned on them with questions that grew into three lovely pictures.

'Which of you men,' he asked, 'if he has a flock of a hundred sheep and has lost one of them does not leave the ninety-nine grazing and go after the lost one, searching until he finds it. When he has found it he puts it across his shoulders with joy and home he comes and calls to his friends and neighbours. "Rejoice with me," he cries, "for I have found my sheep—the one that was lost."

'In just the same way, I tell you, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents more than over ninety-nine good people who do not need to repent.'

Jesus had given them an illustration that every man and boy in that place understood, for this was, as we have seen, a land where many sheep were; and it was a common thing for a sheep to get lost and be found up in the mountain recesses tired and frightened, all alone, with wild beasts prowling round.

Jesus turned now to the women and girls listening to him and asked them a question which gave an illustration of something else that he had seen happen at Nazareth—this time in his own home.

'Or what woman among you,' he went on, 'who has ten silver drachmae, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp and, with the lamp in one hand and her besom of twigs in the other, sweep the house and search carefully till she finds it.'

The drachmae were silver Greek coins. They were not in ordinary use in the markets and shops, but in these Greek cities were part of the beautiful ornaments that the women wore strung in a row across the forehead. Such ornaments were a part of a wife's dowry. They were her very own. She brought them from her mother's home to her own. Probably her mother and grandmother had worn them before her. They were heirlooms—her most cherished possessions. When one of these coins came unfastened and was lost the whole set was spoiled. This woman, in Jesus' story, had lost one of her precious drachmae. The homes of the people have thick walls and hardly any window. This keeps them cool, but makes them dark. So even at noonday the woman would need her baked clay saucer handlamp to search for the little coin in the deep shadows of the room. Naturally, she would be thrilled with joy when she found it.

'She, too,' Jesus continued, 'when she finds it, gathers her women friends and her neighbours and cries: "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is joy among the messengers of God over a single sinner who repents.'

In these stories of the Lost Sheep and of the Lost Coin—

the heart of each tale is not the feeling of the sheep at being lost, as it could not be that of the coin, but the desire of the owner to find what he cares for so much. He cannot rest till he has climbed hills, scrambled down precipices, explored ravines, and crossed moors to discover the sheep; nor can she be happy till she has ransacked every crevice and corner in her house for the coin. These are, then, really stories about God, who, though he lives in eternity and made the stars in their courses, cares above all for the children that he has made, and whose greatest joy it is, when they have gone away from him, to search and find them and bring them back home. Caught on the wings of this, the greatest truth in all the world—for it is the deepest fullest truth about the Spirit that created the Universe and no one had ever before shown it fully to the world—Jesus went on to tell the loveliest of all his stories. It is often called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and sometimes the Parable of the Elder Brother. It is really, however, even more truly the Parable of the Father.

'There was', he said, 'a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father:

'" Father, give me the share of the property that comes to me." So he divided his wealth between them. Not long afterwards the younger son got all together and travelled to a land far away. There he squandered his money in loose living. When he had spent all he had, a dreadful famine came throughout that country and he began to feel the pinch. He went, therefore, and took service with one of the farmers of that land. The farmer sent the young man on to his farm to tend the pigs.[1] He longed to take his fill of the bean pods the pigs were munching, but no one gave him any. He was faint with hunger.

'On coming-to from his swoon, he said to himself, "How many of my father's hired men have more bread to eat than they need, and here am I dying of hunger! I will start and

[1] The most degrading work that a Jew could imagine, for the pig is ceremonially unclean.

go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I don't any longer deserve to be called a son of yours. Treat me as one of your hired men.'"

'So he started off and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father—standing there on the roof scanning the horizon—saw him, and recognizing his son in that ragged, limping figure, felt sorry for him, and ran and threw his arms round his neck and kissed him.

'"Father," the son cried, "I have sinned against Heaven and before you: I no longer deserve to be called a son of yours."

'But the father'—cutting short the speech the boy had rehearsed—'called to his servants, "Quick, fetch a tunic—the best one—and put it on him; and bring a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Fetch the fatted calf and kill it. Let us have a feast and make merry. For my son here was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and is found."

'So they began to make merry.

'Now his elder son was out on the farm. As he was returning and came towards home he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the farm hands and said: "What does all this mean?"

' "Your brother has come," he told him, "and your father has had the fatted calf killed, because he has got him home safe and sound."

'This made him angry; he refused to go in. But his father came out and appealed to him.

' "All these years," retorted the son, "I have been slaving for you. Never have I disobeyed your orders, and yet you have never given me so much as a kid, for me to enjoy myself with my friends. But no sooner does this son of yours come back who has squandered your money with bad company than you kill the fatted calf for him."

' "My son," the father replied, "you are always with me. Everything that is mine is yours. We couldn't help making merry and rejoicing; for this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found." '

CHAPTER L

THE CHILDREN; AND THE SHEIKH

AS Jesus and his men with the women who had joined the group pilgrimaging towards Jerusalem continued to walk southward through Peraea they saw men and boys worshipping the gods and goddesses of the Greeks and the Romans. Here by the side of the street of colonnades of white marble a fountain played in front of an exquisite temple to Diana the huntress. Before her altars incense rose. There a boy, dressed in a creamy tunic, bore a flask of oil and a measure of wheat. He was going to sacrifice to his god. At the cross-roads a golden statue of the God of the Sun, Apollo, blazed in the light.

Set in the rounded hollow of a hill-side was a vast theatre from whose curved seats rising tier behind tier over three thousand people watched the play. Aeschylus the dramatist revealed to them the sufferings of Prometheus, who was bound with chains to a mountain-side and was tormented by the President of the Immortals, Zeus, because he had dared to bring from heaven to man the divine gifts of fire and the arts. They little knew that a greater than Prometheus was bringing to man a lovelier and immortal fire that can never be quenched, and was on his way to his agony, not under the anger of Zeus, but for the sin of man in face of the love of God.

One day in the last of these towns, high up among the rolling hills,[1] Jesus had been healing old and young and teaching.

[1] It is possible, even probable, that this was the ancient town now known as es-Salt, which climbs the sides of the rocky steep high in the hills, among vineyards and olive groves. The reason for thinking that this happened at es-Salt is that it is the nearest town to the Jordan on the opposite side from Jericho, which is the next city named in the Gospel narrative.

Some of the people were very sure of their own goodness and looked down scornfully on other folk.

'Listen,' said Jesus. 'Two men went up into the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, the other was a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee as he stood there by himself said as his prayer: "O God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, robbers, rogues, evil-living, or even like the tax-gatherer over there. I fast twice a week and I pay a tenth of my income for worship."

'The tax-gatherer, however, stood a good way off and would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast, crying: "O God, have mercy on me for my sins!"

'I tell you,' Jesus concluded, 'he went home accepted by God rather than the other.

> 'For every one who lifts himself up will be humbled,
> And he who humbles himself will be lifted up.'

Some mothers standing on the edge of the crowd had been listening to Jesus and watching what he did. They felt that he was so good, so strong, so brave, and so pure that they would like their children to grow like him and his Spirit to be in their children. The mothers, talking to one another, made up their minds to ask this kind-faced Rabbi and Prophet to give their boys and girls his blessing. They talked it out among themselves and got together in a group. Then they began to move forward towards Jesus, leading their children by the hand and carrying the very little ones.

One or two of the disciples hurried fussily forward, and asked what they wanted.

'That the Master should bless our children,' they said timorously.

'No, no,' replied the disciples, and began to hustle them back. The Master, on his way to the terrific crisis that faced them at Jerusalem, could not—the disciples thought—waste his precious strength and time like that. The women were crestfallen. Their faces dropped.

Jesus, looking round, saw what was happening. His eyes flashed. He was very angry.[1]

'Let the children come to me,' he said, sweeping his disciples aside. 'Do not hinder them. For the Kingdom belongs to those who are childlike. I tell you solemnly that no one who does not accept the Kingdom of God like a child can possibly enter it.'

The boys and girls who had begun to creep hurriedly away as they heard the rough words of the followers of the strange Rabbi turned again as they heard him say these words. Then they saw him smiling at them with such love in his eyes and on his lips that they were quite ready to let go of their mothers' hands and run to him. He stooped down and took them up one by one in his arms and gave them his blessing.

He then rose up and started to leave the town. He turned his face west, towards Jericho and Jerusalem; towards his enemies who were plotting to kill him; towards all the struggle and agony that lay ahead of him, but in his heart he held the recollection of the happy round brown faces of smiling boys and girls. And into the children's dreams that night there came the smile of the strong, good Rabbi who had blessed them.

While Jesus was talking with the people in this town and gathering the children round him, a young man was watching, who had been thinking what he ought to do with his life. 'What is the right way to live?' he asked himself.

He had lived the best life that he knew. Yet he felt dissatisfied. He had plenty of money, and was surrounded with good things in his home. He was a young sheikh, a chieftain over people in those parts. He liked wealth and power. He was, nevertheless, still restless for something better; he

[1] We have only two records of Jesus being angry. This was one. The other was when the Pharisees were against his healing the man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. In both cases it is Peter, through Mark, who tells us of the wrath of Jesus.

wanted fuller life, eternal life. As he looked at Jesus and listened to him—as he felt his power, saw his strong, eager face, listened to his stirring wise words, the young sheikh was sure that he had the secret of life. It was difficult, however, to summon up courage to speak to him. Watching Jesus smiling in the midst of the little group of happy children led the young man to make up his mind.

Jesus stood up and took the road once more, with his face towards Jerusalem. It was the young man's last chance. Jesus was already on the outskirts of the town when the youth started to run after him. Stopping in front of Jesus, he knelt down in all his fine clothes in the dust of the road and burst out with the baffling question that was tormenting him.

'Good Rabbi,' he asked, 'what am I to do to be the heir to life, eternal life?'

Eternal life means, not only life after death, but life now in this world lived, not as a thing that ends with death, but as the possession of a man who is an eternal soul in the presence of an everlasting God.

'Why do you call me "good"?' asked Jesus. 'No one is good except one, that is God.'

'You know the commandments,' Jesus went on: 'Commit no murder. Do not steal. Do not tell lies in giving evidence. Do not defraud. Honour your father and mother, and love your neighbour as yourself!'

'All these commands,' the young man said, 'I have carefully obeyed, shunning these sins from my boyhood. What is it that I still lack?'

As Jesus looked at the youth there with all his fresh young strength and enthusiasm, and his will to live a noble life, his heart went out to him. He loved him. He saw in that youth—in his enthusiasm, his strength, his power to lead, his spirit—marvellous possibilities. What might not happen if, just when Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to meet his supreme trial, that young man should devote his gifts to the

work of the new Kingdom. Jesus decided to set him the supreme test.

'If you want to be perfect,' said Jesus, 'one thing is still lacking. Go, sell all that you possess and give the proceeds to the poor and you shall have riches in heaven; and come and follow me.'

It was the decisive moment in the life of that youth. All that he was ever to be hung in the balance of his will. He hung his head. He had great possessions. He could not face the test. He rose to his feet and with darkened, gloomy face he turned his back on Jesus and went back to his rich home.

Jesus looked round on the group of his disciples.

'With how hard a struggle can those who rely on being well-off enter into the Kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.'[1]

The disciples were astonished beyond measure at this.

'Who, then, can be saved?' they exclaimed.

'Humanly speaking, it is impossible,' said Jesus, looking intently into their faces, 'but with God it is not; for everything is possible with God.'

At this point Peter, who was often good at boasting, blurted out to Jesus what was perfectly true—

'Remember, we in this group have left everything and have followed you.'

'In downright truth, I tell you,' replied Jesus, turning to him, 'that there is no one who has left his home, or brothers or sisters, mother or father, or children, or land for my sake and for the sake of the Good News who does not get a hundred times as much—homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children,

[1] Teachers in the schools in the time of Jesus often used the phrase 'to drive an elephant through the eye of a needle' to express vividly that something was extremely difficult. Examples can be found in a Hebrew Lexicon (e.g. Buxtorf's). There is no ground for toning down this vivid Oriental phrase by suggesting—as has frequently been done—that the needle's eye is the tiny door in a big city gate so that the camel must unload to get through; or that 'camel' should really be 'cable'.

lands—now in this present time,'—and with a sudden flash of thought of the cruel road they were now to take in the midst of promise—'and persecution thrown in—and in the next world life eternal.'

All those who were members of his New Community of the Kingdom were, he meant, brothers and sisters, mothers and children of each other.

'Many who are now first will be last,' he added, 'and many who are last will be first.'

Jesus went on to tell a strange and baffling story to illustrate his saying that the first shall be last and the last first.

It was a story of work in vineyards. The wall of loose stone around a vineyard and the watch-tower, which is also built up of loose stone about twenty feet high, must be repaired. Every December and January the vines themselves must be pruned and trained. The ground has to be hoed during the spring-time in order to cleanse it from weeds. The blossom in April and May needs to be watched and pruned. In September (or even earlier in the Jordan Valley) the grapes must be picked and crushed in the wine-presses.

Jesus told a story of one of the busy seasons. It must have been a story of grape-harvest in the late summer, for it speaks of 'the heat of the day' and of a period of work between five in the afternoon and sunset, after which all work in the vineyard stops.

'The Kingdom of Heaven,' Jesus said, 'is like an employer who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. Having struck a bargain with them to work for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard. Later, at about nine o'clock, he went out into the market-place and saw other men loitering about doing nothing. He said to them as well: "You go into the vineyard too, and I will pay you what is right." In they went. Again he went out at twelve o'clock and at about three. Each time he did the same thing; and going out again at about five o'clock he found others lounging about.

'"Why," he asked them, "have you been loitering here all day long doing nothing?"

'"Because no one has hired us," they replied.

'"You go as well into the vineyard," said he.

'When evening came the master said to his bailiff, "Call the men and pay them their wages. Begin with the last gang and end with the first."

'When the men came who had started work at five o'clock they received a shilling each. When the first came they anticipated getting more, but they, too, only got a shilling. So, when they had taken it, they grumbled against the employer. "Those who came last," they said, "have done only one hour's work, yet you have put them on the same level with us who have borne the burden and heat of the day."

'He replied to one of them: "My friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a shilling? Take your money and be off. I choose to give to this last just as much as I gave to you. Have I not a right to do as I please with what belongs to me? Do you bear a grudge because I am generous?"

'So,' Jesus concluded, 'the last shall be first and the first last.'

We understand this story more clearly when we remember that Peter had, just before, said: 'We have given up everything for you.' Peter's question implied another one. 'What shall we get?' Jesus by this story cancels out the whole idea of God dealing with men like boys in an old-fashioned school—trying to make them work either by fear of punishment or hope of reward, or both. The real reason for working is not to escape pain or to get a gift, but to please the father and to serve the family. In return God opens the door for all his sons into the Kingdom of his love. That is the equal wage for all. What more could a man ask than to go into God's Kingdom; to find true what the father said to the elder son in the other story—'all that I have is yours.' And how could a man wish any one in the world to have less?

CHAPTER LI

'MY CUP'

JOHN and James—the 'Sons of Thunder' as Jesus called them—as well as Salome, their mother, were in a strange turmoil as they walked behind Jesus down the valley towards the gorge of the Jordan. Terror of unknown things to come blended in them with the hope of triumph. Clouds loomed ahead of them; but whether they would break in lightning to destroy or open in a vision of the King coming in his glory —that they could not tell.

Their Master was marching to Jerusalem. He said that the rulers would deliver him to death. This tormented and utterly perplexed them. How could that be? He was come to bring in the Kingdom of God. If God was with Jesus, if Jesus had God's power within him and helping him, he could overcome everything. He told them that when he did reach Jerusalem the rulers would attack him and that he would be killed, but to rise again. The Kingdom, however, would come. Nothing could drive from their minds the picture that had been painted there when they were boys—the picture that most people saw—of a kingdom with a golden throne set up in Jerusalem on which God's Messiah would sit and would rule in justice and peace.

How could they grasp that the Kingdom comes like seed which loses its life to grow into an ear of corn with sixty, eighty, or a hundred seeds in it; like leaven silently changing from within the very character of the bread? How could they grasp that it would be a Kingdom of Love and not of Law; ruled by an Invisible King? That was too subtle—and too simple.

Would Jesus not (thought the two young fisher brothers James and John) do as the prophets said and smite the threshing-floor of Palestine with his flail so that the Romans would be broken and scattered? Would not their Master,

as God's anointed King, set up his glorious throne over the Jewish people on the Hill of David? And when he did—what splendid power would come to the Twelve who had stood by him in the dark and difficult days! To be King Jesus' chief counsellors—that was an intoxicating vision for these fishermen's sons—and for their mother, Salome!

They took good care that neither Jesus nor their comrades, Peter and Andrew and the rest, should hear what they were planning. Salome watched her time. Seizing an occasion when Jesus was separated a little from the Twelve, she hurried to him with her two sons. She threw herself at his feet, like a suppliant before a King.

'What is it that you want?' asked Jesus.

'Command,' replied Zebedee's wife, 'that these my two sons may sit in your kingdom, one at your right hand and one at your left.'

As she made her request for the places for the King's greatest nobles to be reserved for her sons, the picture of a Roman cross—the gallows on which criminals were nailed, flanked on either side by others—came into Jesus' mind. He looked at the two eager young fellows in whose eyes real hero-worship and selfish personal ambition were strangely blended.

'You have no idea what you are asking,' Jesus replied. 'Can you drink out of the cup from which I am about to drink?'

'We can,' the eager youths blurted out. For the bare idea of Jesus coming to a criminal's death had never really dawned on their imagination.

'You shall,' Jesus answered; 'you shall drink out of my cup. A seat at my right hand or at my left, however, is not mine to grant; those belong to the men for whom they are kept by my Father.'

The ten other disciples heard of this conversation, and were furious at their young comrades who, spurred by their mother's ambitions, had tried to steal a march on them and

to get the vizierships in the new Kingdom reserved for themselves. High words were flung to and fro.

'Come here,' said Jesus to his twelve agitated followers. As they gathered shamefacedly round him, he said to them:

'You well know that the rulers of the pagans tyrannize over them and their great men play the despot. They call themselves "Benefactors"—"Euergetae",' he said, humorously, quoting the name that the Ptolemies ruling over Egypt actually used to give themselves. 'Not so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be the "Great"[1] must be your servant; and whoever wants to be first among you, the "Maximus,"[2] must be the slave of all—just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life in payment for the freedom of many slaves.'

Jesus, with that saying, pierced to the secret heart of them all. For the fury of the ten with the two did not blaze solely because Salome's ambition for her boys was a contradiction of all that Jesus had taught. Their anger flamed up because James and John had been the first to get in with a demand for high office that lurked in the heart of some, if not all, the others.

Jesus and the Twelve set off once more with the other followers through the hills of Transjordania towards the Jordan and Jericho. A lovely brook of water springing from the hills ran alongside the road, singing over the boulders. They drank from it when they felt thirsty. The exquisite green leaves of the oleanders on the bank could not hide the sharp glory of the red buds all breaking into flower in the spring sunshine. Tall bulrushes waved by the side of the water. Birds were busy building nests.

Jesus, absorbed in thought, strode along, his face set. He drew ahead of them. They were with him; yet he was terribly alone. Even after all that he had taught them, after all the

[1] He used the word as a title, like Alexander 'the Great', or Charlemagne.

[2] Quoting an accepted title of the Roman Emperor at the time.

time that he had been with them, they did not really know him and grasp what he had come to give. That made him lonely.

They still followed loyally, but—as they saw the set of his back and the fixed will in his face—they followed with dread in their hearts. What was in Jesus' heart no mind can fully fathom. How can we climb the heights of that courage or sound the depths of the love that inspired him as he faced and deliberately moved towards his goal to show men that God is really Love and is suffering for men's sin; and for that sin is himself to face death by cruel, slow torture on a Roman cross? Jesus' back, as he moved forward ahead of them, spoke to the Twelve of an unswerving movement towards that goal.

So Jesus and his company came down the curving ravine by the side of the ever-running stream through the hills down into the heavy heat of the Jordan valley. A haze hung over the valley. To the left the vapour rose from the Dead Sea, whose surface gleamed like dull steel in the sunshine. They reached the sediment of mud left by the February floods—the swelling of the Jordan. It was now cracked and baked by the sun. Following the tracks of the caravans, they at last came to the ford of the river and waded across to the western side. The path now led up through hillocks and pyramids of mud that had been carved into fantastic, ghoulish shapes by the flood waters.

Ahead lay the city of Jericho. Its palm trees wavered in the hot, shimmering air. Its marble palace, its amphitheatre, and the citadel of Cypros above and behind the town—all of which Herod the Great had built and his son, Prince Archelaus, had restored after the Jews had gutted them in the rebellion that followed Herod's death—spoke of the power of the kingdoms of this world. Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, now ruled Jericho. The orchards, fed by the waters of Elisha's fountain, made a bower of greenery and of fruits in the heat of the valley. Beyond and above the city rose the forbidding mass of the barren Judaean hills. That

mass buttressed the wilderness in which Jesus had met his forty days' testing. Through those hills they must now make the ascent into Jerusalem.

In Jericho all was agog with preparation for the Feast. The city was at the cross-roads of many caravan routes. They came from the East—from Persia, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, and from Peraea across the Jordan. They ran from Galilee and Syria on the north; from Idumaea in the south; and all joined to go up the Jerusalem ascent on the west.

Many thousands of pilgrims were, therefore, already there. Jesus' arrival intensified the turmoil. The large group who were walking with him and their talk of the swiftly coming Kingdom called the attention of the crowds to him. The multitude was eager to see and hear the Nazarene Rabbi. This Prophet, many folk said, was about to bring in the Kingdom of God. The pilgrims gathered expectantly around him as he moved on through Jericho. His twelve friends were close beside him, the larger company trailing behind.

One citizen of Jericho who desired intensely to see Jesus was too short to look over people's shoulders. He was a well-known character, for he had made himself very rich by collecting taxes from the people. He was one of the loathed class of *publicani*. He was, indeed, a chief inspector of taxes, an *architelones*. He had bought by auction from Rome the privilege, not only of collecting taxes—which meant getting what he could out of the people—but of selling to other *publicani* under him the same right. For that reason, of all men in Jericho, none was more unpopular among the people than this rich publican, Zacchaeus—a Hebrew word meaning 'pure'! But was he not himself anxious to be a better man?

Zacchaeus was so eager to see Jesus that he ran on ahead of the crowd and scrambled up the trunk of a sycamore tree. Perched there, on a convenient branch, he could see all that was going on. Why did he climb the tree? For he was no schoolboy, but a rich man, a grown citizen of Jericho. Had

he some sharp twinges of conscience, and was hoping that in Jesus he would find some way to be better? He had certainly heard the orthodox Jews sharply criticizing Jesus as 'a friend of tax-gatherers', and as one who even had called a *publicanus* to be one of his disciples. That made Zacchaeus doubly keen to see Jesus.

Slowly the crowd came moving along the road, Jesus in the centre. At last they were passing Zacchaeus in his tree. To his amazement Jesus stopped by the tree and looked up at the little man. More astonishing still, Jesus, with a frank greeting, hailed him as a friend.

'Zacchaeus,' he said, 'be quick and come down. To-day I must stay in your house.'

Jesus clearly felt that a man who could be so undignified and energetic as to climb a tree to see him must need him. As swiftly as ever he could, Zacchaeus, trembling with joy, slid to the ground and greeted the Master, saying what pleasure it would give him to have Jesus as his guest. So they walked together towards Zacchaeus' home in order that Jesus could rest there before starting the long stiff climb to Jerusalem.

Zacchaeus was delighted; but the crowd of pilgrims was filled with horrified disgust. Jesus a guest of a Jew who had sold himself to Rome, and had betrayed God in doing so; a double-dyed traitor to Jehovah and to his nation! They were furious.

'Look,' they muttered; 'Jesus is going to be the guest of a sinful man.'

It was indeed a brave act—many would have said a foolhardy one—for Jesus so to endanger the confidence and support of the mass of pilgrims who were his defence against the High Priests, and to do that on the eve of the Sabbath before the supreme crisis of his life. Zacchaeus heard the murmuring. He stopped in the street, and with all the crowd of pilgrims, as well as fellow-citizens of Jericho as his witnesses, he cried:

W. Holman Hunt.

THE PLAIN OF THE GIANTS (REPHAÏM) FROM JERUSALEM.

'Here and now, Master, I will give half of all that I possess to the poor; and if I have cheated anybody, I will give four times as much back to him.'

Jesus was full of joy at this. Zacchaeus had made no kind of profession of faith, but he had met the test from which even the rich young ruler had flinched—that of giving up his wealth in order to follow the way of Jesus.

Zacchaeus was transformed. His values were turned upside down. In one sweep he gave away, not only half of his great wealth, but ample repayment of taxes unjustly extorted. It was a superb repentance, made publicly in face of the people he had wronged. He now for the first time was worthy of the name 'pure'—Zacchaeus.

What had changed Zacchaeus was Jesus' love that swept aside all the hate that the Jews had for the publican. Instead of giving him the cold shoulder of derision, Jesus had asked him to take him right into his home. He did not simply offer Zacchaeus friendship; he asked of Zacchaeus the courtesies of friendship. It was a master-stroke. It made a new Zacchaeus—just, honourable, and courageous.

'To-day,' said Jesus, turning towards Zacchaeus, 'salvation has come to this house, seeing that he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man,' he concluded, quoting the Prophet Ezekiel, 'has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' [1]

That long journey, with its stories of the shepherd seeking the sheep, the woman sweeping for her coin, the father rejoicing to bring home his son, came to its immortal climax when, not in a story, but in real life, the lost Zacchaeus was found and came home with Jesus into the Kingdom of the Father.

[1] Ezekiel xxxiv. 16.

PART VI

THE KING

CHAPTER LII

'THY KING COMETH'

JESUS stopped before going into Zacchaeus' house to tell the people a story founded on a comparatively recent happening in Jericho itself.

To look at the scene as it spread before Jesus' eyes at that moment is to grasp why he told this particular story there and then. This crowd of pilgrims was aflame with the hope that the Kingdom of God was at once coming. Most of them expected that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem at the head of the multitude, a Warrior-Prince armed with the might of God. He would, by the power of the Almighty, sweep Pilate the Procurator, Herod Antipas, and the Roman legions into the sea. He would reign in justice on David's throne on the Hill of Zion.

The ambition of John and James to be the chief officers in Jesus' Kingdom had shown him once more how these followers of his still half thought that he would bring in a political Kingdom of God. If John and James, after more than two years with Jesus, were so crude and wrong-headed in their ideas, what might not happen with an excited mob of many thousands, the flame of whose nationalism was being blown into a devouring fire by the religious mob-excitement of pilgrimage and Festival. Jesus would enter Jerusalem forty-eight hours later at their head. He might find himself swept along by half a million Jews from all over the Roman world in uncontrollable rebellion against Rome. The responsibility was terrible.

Jesus, feeling the throb of this hot passion in the crowd—and even in his Twelve men—made a last effort to show how false their idea was, and what service to the Kingdom really means. The story gripped them at once. For he drew a startling picture of a sensational event that had happened

in Jericho in the life of most of the adult citizens who were standing there listening.

'A lord,' said Jesus, 'travelled to a far-away land to get appointed king in his own land and then to return.'

Every one who heard Jesus at once thought of Prince Archelaus, King Herod the Great's elder son, who had lived in Jericho, and whose palace was close by. Archelaus went to Rome when Jesus was a child to ask that, under his father Herod's will, he might rule over Judaea as a vassal of Caesar Augustus. This lord, Jesus told the multitude, wanted to find out who were the best of his servants to rule as governors under him when he returned.

'Before starting,' said Jesus, 'the lord called his ten servants. To each of them he gave five pounds.

' "Trade with the money in my absence," said he.

'The lord's own fellow-countrymen hated him. They sent a deputation after him to say "We are not willing to have this lord as our king."

'Nevertheless,' said Jesus, 'he got the royal power and returned home.'

This is exactly what happened with Prince Archelaus. His soldiers had massacred thousands of Jews at the time of the Passover in Jerusalem to quell a rebellion. For that reason a deputation of eighty Jews went to the Emperor at Rome begging Caesar not to keep them in subjection to these hard, tyrannical Idumaean rulers—the Herods. But Caesar refused their request, and gave Archelaus the kingdom. After that, however, he became so harsh and bloodthirsty a despot that even Caesar had at last lost patience and had expelled Archelaus out of Palestine into Gaul, where he was living in exile at the very time when Jesus was telling this story in Jericho.

'Then,' Jesus continued, 'he summoned the servants to whom he had given the money, so that he might find out what trading success they had achieved.

' "Sir," said the first, coming forward, "your five pounds has produced another fifty."

' "Well done," he answered, "good and faithful servant, because you have been trustworthy in a small affair, you are made governor of ten towns."

' "Your five pounds, Sir," said the second, "has produced twenty-five."

' "And you shall be governor of five towns," responded the ruler.

'The next came. "Sir," he said, "here are your five pounds. I wrapped the money up safe in a cloth, for I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man; you take hold of what you have not put down, and you reap what you did not sow."

' "You wicked servant," replied the ruler, "I will judge you by your own words. You knew me to be a hard man, taking possession of what I never put down and reaping what I never sowed! Why, then, did you not put my money into a bank, so that when I returned I might have taken it out with interest?"

' "Take the five pounds from him," he ordered those standing by, "and give it to the one who has fifty."

' "Sir," they protested, "he already has fifty."

' "I tell you," replied the ruler, "that to every one who has more shall be given; and from him who has nothing even what he has shall be taken away. And as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to be made king, bring them here and cut them in pieces before me." '

The listeners recognized that this was just what happened, for Archelaus, on returning from Rome when Caesar appointed him ruler over Judaea, made the men who had supported him governors of cities and, Josephus tells us, wrought bloody vengeance on the others.

In this story Jesus struck another powerful blow at the tragic blunder that made Zebedee's wife ask for high office for her boys—the catastrophe of serving the Kingdom of God for what you can get out of it. You do not become a ruler under the king by asking for a good place for yourself, but

by using the gifts that the king has put into your hands to the very best advantage of the kingdom. You do for the kingdom, not as little as you dare, but as much as you can. Your reward is, not ease, but greater responsibility. You have done well with a little—then rule a city.

Jesus now went into Zacchaeus' house. There he rested. At sunset that day the Sabbath began, which gave Jesus a whole day's rest, and gave his host much opportunity of talk with him. At dawn on the first day of the week—the day after the Sabbath—Jesus with his disciples took the road again. The throng of pilgrims on the way to the Feast was already on the move. It was still a full week before the Passover was due to be celebrated. Many thousands of pilgrims from foreign lands came to Jerusalem, however, some days ahead, partly in order to be ceremonially purified by the priests after their life in heathen lands. These pilgrims rallied round Jesus as they saw him start on the road to the Holy City.

Outside the gates of Jericho sat a blind man called Bar-Timaeus—or the Son of Timaeus. He was begging. As he heard the shuffling of many feet on the road and the murmur of a thousand voices he called out to ask what was happening.

'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by,' came the answer.

The blind beggar knew about Jesus and his wonderful powers. So he started to shout aloud to Jesus to come to his help.

'Son of David,' he cried; 'Jesus, have pity on me.'

That the beggar should call out 'Son of David' showed that the belief that Jesus was the coming king had seized him, as it had thousands of others. For David was the greatest of all the kings who ever ruled in Jerusalem, and every one believed that the Messiah-King would be a descendant of his.

'Be quiet,' many in the crowd snapped at the blind man. 'Be quiet!'

The more they told him to stop, however, the louder

he shouted. He was not going to miss his one chance of sight.

'Son of David, take pity on me,' he shouted across the noise of the shuffling mass of pilgrims.

Jesus stopped near where the man sat. He could not actually see Bar-Timaeus for the dense crowd; he simply heard a voice.

'Call him,' he said to the people on that side.

'Courage,' they cried out to Bar-Timaeus. 'Get up, he is calling you.'

The blind man eagerly flung his cloak off his shoulders, leapt to his feet, and was led by friendly hands to Jesus.

'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked.

'Rabboni,' he answered, using a word that is of even deeper respect and reverence than Rabbi, 'I want to recover my sight.'

'You may go,' Jesus answered, 'your faith has made you well.'

Sight flashed into Bar-Timaeus' eyes. He leapt for joy. He could see. His persistence and his faith had won new life for him. He at once joined the crowd and went walking along the road up to Jerusalem in the company of Jesus. The pilgrims were filled with joyful excitement. 'Praise God,' they shouted and sang. The wonder of healing by Jesus in response to the cry 'Son of David' had set every nerve of the pilgrim procession tingling with the thought of the Messiah entering Jerusalem.

So, with Jesus at their head and his comrades around him, the long caravan of pilgrims breasted the steep climb along the winding, broken road towards Jerusalem. All day they walked and always the road climbed among the hills. The multitudes sang their Songs of Ascent to the city. For example:

> 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
> So the Eternal is round about his people,
> From henceforth even for ever.'

Then the happy chant:

'Behold how good and pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity.
It is like the precious ointment upon the head.'
. . .
'As the dew from Hermon
That came down upon the mountains of Zion.'

And then the favourite song of all:

'I was glad when they said unto me,
"Let us go into the house of the Eternal."
Our feet shall stand within thy gates,
O Jerusalem.'
. . . . . .
'Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces,
For my brothers' and my companions' sake,
I will now say, "Peace be within thee."'[1]

So the multitude of pilgrims, following Jesus as their leader, went singing or talking up the long, rocky way. But Jesus and his fellowship were in silence most of the time. For the disciples the days to come were dark with a menace that they could only dimly see. For Jesus the steep ascent was tense with ultimate crisis. The hour was approaching nearer with every step when the clash with the High Priest and his men would test and torture Jesus. He would not go back on his tracks nor swerve in his path; he set his face to go straight on to the end.

Even as Jesus walked up that road, Annas, Caiaphas, and indeed the whole Sanhedrin were discussing him in the Temple and planning what to do. The city was torn with debate on Jesus because of the mighty evidence of his power given in the raising of Lazarus.

'What do you think?' they asked one another. 'Do you think Jesus will come up to the Festival?'

[1] A number of these Songs of Ascent (or of Degrees) will be found from Psalm lxx to cxxxiv.

Already Caiaphas had given orders that, if he did come up, the Sanhedrin was to be told where he was staying so that they could arrest him.

In Jesus' own mind as he came up the hill towards Jerusalem glowed those visions of the prophets and poets about the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem which he had known from boyhood. Most famous of them all was the cry:

'The stone which the builders rejected
Is become the headstone of the corner.
This is the Lord's doing;
It is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day which the Lord hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.'

. . . . . .

'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'[1]

'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold thy King cometh unto thee:
He is just and having salvation.
Lowly he comes, riding upon an ass,
Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.'[2]

Jesus determined what he would do. This very day he would ride into Jerusalem, as this poet and that prophet had said the Messiah would enter the city of God, in the name of the Lord, lowly, riding upon an ass. The hour had come to show himself to his nation in Jerusalem as the Christ sent by God. He sent a messenger ahead to make an arrangement with a man whom he knew who lived on the Mount of Olives.

It was afternoon when they came in sight of Bethany that lay in an elbow on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Jerusalem, still hidden, lay three-quarters of a mile distant facing the west side of the Mount. Jesus' eyes lighted up at the sight of the village where Martha and Mary, with their brother Lazarus, lived. He sent on two of his disciples

[1] Psalm cxviii. 22–26. [2] Zechariah ix. 9.

about a quarter of a mile farther up the slope of the Mount to a village called Bethphage—the House of Green Figs.

'Go to the village facing you,' he said, 'and as soon as you get there you will find an ass tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me. If any one asks you, "Why are you doing that?" say, "The Master needs them and will send them back without delay." '

Away went the disciples in haste. They found the donkey and her colt. They began to untether them.

'What are you doing?' asked the owner.

The disciples gave the password that Jesus had told them to use—'The Master needs them.' At once the owner let them lead the animals away to where Jesus was. The disciples threw their cloaks on to the ass's back. Jesus mounted, and rode on at the head of the whole multitude of pilgrims, the colt trotting behind its mother. The road wound up the eastern slope of the Mount across a saddle of the hill. There the way makes a double curve like the letter 'S' and swings out over the ridge into full view of Jerusalem.

Like flame on a sun-parched, wind-swept moorland, the enthusiasm spread among the crowd as they saw their leader —'the Son of David'—riding into David's city seated on an ass. Thousands of other pilgrims were already in camp on the Mount of Olives. The whole multitude running alongside and in front of Jesus, they cast off their cloaks and threw them on the rough, rocky road for him to ride over. They tore down palm branches from their spring leafage on the trees and threw these down too under the feet of the ass, as for the passage of royalty.

Jesus passed round the first curve in the road after the saddle of the Mount was passed. Here the southern hill of David's city came in sight, covered with the palaces of the high priests and others, and up above it the royal residence of Herod.

'Hosanna,' the multitude shouted exultantly as they threw down the palm leaves. 'Save us' is the meaning of 'Hosanna';

'*There you will find an ass tied and a colt with her.*'
A donkey and colt by Bethphage on the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday.

PLATE XXVIII

it was used at the Feast of Tabernacles when the people carried their palm branches in procession with the priest who carried up the water to the altar from the Pool of Siloam.[1] Shouting aloud, the multitude of those who believed in Jesus rejoiced and praised God for the mighty works that they had seen Jesus do.

'Hosanna—Save us,' they cried; and then in a confused turmoil of enthusiasm chanted sayings of the prophet Zechariah and of the Psalms.

'Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.
Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh;
The Kingdom of our father David.
Peace in heaven; and glory in the highest.'

In the crowd, however, were some who went silently and with surly looks growling their displeasure.

'Look you,' the Pharisees muttered to one another. 'We are making no headway. Why, the whole world has run after him.'

'Rabbi,' cried some other Pharisees, hustling through the crowd to get alongside Jesus, 'hold your disciples in check.'

'I tell you,' Jesus exclaimed, turning sternly on them, sweeping aside their impertinent demand, and opening to them the deep fountains of longing that those shouts revealed, 'I tell you, if they were to keep quiet, the very stones would cry out.'

The ass had now carried Jesus round the next curve of the Mount. A few paces farther on he came into full view of the city across the ravine of the Kidron. He saw the walls, the thousand roofs, the towering Temple. The sight of his nation's capital, the city that had again and again rejected him, the city where he was now to meet a most dreadful death—came suddenly upon him; after days of lonely, bitter journeying at the head of his still half-blind and slow-

[1] Indeed, the word had become so connected with the palm branches that the people were spoken of as throwing down their 'Hosannas' in a heap in the Temple when the procession was over.

witted followers. About his ears surged the roar of the multitude hailing him as the King coming to the City of David. Before his eyes was the Temple whose rulers not once or twice but again and again had opposed him. The conflicting tides broke Jesus' heart. Tears burst from his eyes. He wept aloud with uncontrollable sobbing[1] as he looked on the City of Peace—Jerusalem.

As in sudden vision Jesus saw the inevitable and awful tragedy—the thing that could not but happen, that did happen—if Jerusalem stubbornly set its face like flint to receive only a Messiah that would fight with the sword to hurl the Romans into the sea. For it must follow as the night the day, that violence would beget violence; and Rome—unforgiving, irresistible, remorseless Rome—would invest the rebellious city, dash her sons to pieces, and send her walls crashing down into the ravine.

'Would that you knew,' Jesus cried, 'yes, you Jerusalem, even to-day on what your peace[2] depends. But now it is hidden from your eyes. For the time is coming when your enemies will throw up earthworks around you and a wall, besieging you and hemming you in on every side; and they will trample you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another—because you did not know "the time of your visitation." '

He rode on down the steeply winding path to the bed of the ravine and up the other side towards the city. The shouts of the pilgrims echoed across the valley. The populace of Jerusalem itself—that hard-faced, sneering, stiff-necked mass living on what they could grind from the pilgrims, or could, by cringing, coax from the priests—came pouring out. The whole city was moved—'shaken as by an earthquake' is the force of the word Matthew uses to describe the upheaval.

[1] So the strength of the Greek verb conveys it.

[2] The English misses the strength of the reiteration of Shalem (peace) after Jerusalem. 'Would that the City of Peace knew on what her Peace depends.'

'Who is this?' they cried.

'This,' the crowd called back, 'is Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Jesus went up into the city and right into the Temple. Annas and Caiaphas, who had given orders for his arrest, were paralysed. To arrest him now would be to court fearful, irreparable disaster—the fury of a passionate multitude baulked of its will. Yet the enthusiasm of the pilgrims set the rulers to seek with cold ferocity some way of ending him.

Was there, they asked themselves, no traitor in his following who would betray him?

Jesus looked around, made a plan for the morrow—a plan of staggering audacity. Turning, he then left the Temple and the city. Going back by the same route, he climbed the Mount of Olives in the now swiftly gathering darkness with the Twelve around him and at last reached Bethany and home, where he could rest in the comradeship of Martha and Mary and Lazarus.

CHAPTER LIII

THE DEN OF ROBBERS

EARLY next morning Jesus started to carry out the daring stroke that he had planned. He left Bethany and came along the familiar road over the mountain-ridge towards Jerusalem.

As he caught the first glimpse of the Temple his will leapt to the high adventure which he had determined to take. The scathing words of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, who were the trumpets of God's will, rang in Jesus' mind as he recalled the Feast-market in the Temple courts—'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations; but you are making it a den of robbers.'[1]

That was God's will. It was clearly a task of a Son of God to cleanse the place so that it could once more be a house of prayer.

Jesus with his men plunged down the ravine, climbed to the city, and so into the gate of the Temple. He came out through the shadows of the porch into the sunshine of the Court of the Gentiles. The familiar hubbub of thousands of men wrangling and chaffering, the bleating of sheep, and the cooing of innumerable doves broke on his ears. Among the dense masses of pilgrims were scores of small tables. On each stood piles of money and a little weighing machine. Behind each table sat a money-changer. These men, who had set up their stalls in the country towns a month before the Passover, had already come up to the Temple some days before the Feast to start their commerce there.

Every pilgrim, save women or slaves or children, must pay to the Temple treasury at Jerusalem a half-shekel or a Galilean shekel.[2] They had come from all the lands in the world

[1] Isaiah lvi. 7 and Jeremiah vii. 11.

[2] Equal to about one shilling and twopence.

where Jews lived. Each brought money of his own land in his money bag. Here was a Persian Jew who had crossed deserts on camel-back; there a young man on foot from Tyre; yonder a swarthy proselyte who had crossed the desert trails from Egypt; there again a Rabbi who had sailed from Athens, and a group of proud young travellers from Rome itself. They carried Persian, Tyrian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman money. Indeed, on that particular morning, four full days before the Feast, the majority of the pilgrims were not from Judaea or Galilee but from foreign lands.

The reason why all the money must be paid in Temple shekels was that the coins of all the nations except the Jews had the heads of kings or emperors, gods or goddesses carved upon them. Any 'graven image' was a breach of the second commandment. Above all, such a coin could not be used in the Holy Place.

To change his Roman denarii or Greek drachmae into a Temple half-shekel these Jewish youths from Rome and Athens had to pay a fee of about twenty per cent. on the value of the coins. The money-changer, however, often told him, in addition, that his denarii were worn. 'They are not full weight,' the money-changer declared. So the youth must pay still more. He would often refuse with oaths. The crowd joined in. So around these Eastern money-changers the noise of shrill voices disputing, declaiming, and swearing rose angrily on the air, in the precincts of the Holy Place where the Jew believed the presence of God was to be found.

In those few days leading up to the Passover Feast the money-changers made—it was computed at the time—a profit of between £8,000 and £9,000 on exchange for the Temple dues alone. Most of this was wrung from working and peasant people; and all in the name of the worship of God. No wonder the people were exasperated at times to the point of fury. But they were powerless.

So Jesus saw poor people, at the very time when they were coming to pay their vows to their God, being bled in the

name of God of their small savings for the gain of the money-changers. But worse was to follow.

This Greek mason, that small farmer from Cyprus, the lawyer yonder from Alexandria had not been able to bring with them on their long journey the needful lamb or dove for sacrifice. They must buy them in the Temple in the Court of the Gentiles. In order to avoid endless wrangling with the sheep merchant on their foreign money they first changed still more of their Greek and Cypriote money into shekels [1] at the money-changer's, who thus made more profit on them. Then they went to the merchants who sold sheep and doves. One advantage of buying these animals in the Temple area was that the bird or beast had already been examined by the priest, and had been washed in the sheep-cistern by the Pool of Bethesda. It was, therefore, already passed as being without blemish and fit for sacrifice. But this put the pilgrim again at the mercy of the Temple merchants, who had practically a monopoly of the sale of doves and lambs.

Near by sat the men with cages of doves. The birds fluttered and dashed at the wicker-work of their cages as the salesman thrust in his hand to clutch one of them to show to a peasant-pilgrim, who could not afford even a lamb. They bargained to and fro. At last the poor pilgrim dragged from his purse of raw leather the savings of half a year. Charges were made amounting to as much as a golden denar (about fifteen shillings) for two doves whose price in the open market was a quarter of a silver denar (or about twopence).

A wave of pity and of wrath swept through Jesus. Pity for these simple pilgrims, workers with their hands, who, with the sweat of their brow by day and night, had earned the money—wrath at the injustice of these swindlers who stole the money from them under the cloak of the sale for sacrifice to God.

Not less than a hundred thousand animals were sold in that week for the sacrifice of pilgrims from all parts of the world.

[1] The first exchange described above was for the Temple dues.

In this way sacrifice to the worship of God, who said 'I will have justice and mercy', had grown into a colossal commerce at the expense of the poor—around the very Holy of Holies.

Behind the money-changer and the merchants were hidden the family of the ex-high priest, Annas. These very booths of the merchants were called the Booths of the Sons of Annas. Annas, in his princely palace on the hill and his sons and son-in-law, Caiaphas, in theirs, raked in millions of shekels as controllers of the Temple market. The avarice and corruption, the vicious luxury, gluttony, and oppression of the High Priest and his family were a byword among the people.

Jesus had, as a boy, seen his father labouring in the carpenter's shop; his friends driving the plough; his mother patching clothes and stinting food in the home to save first one denarius and then another until at long last the Galilean shekel was bought and put away for the Temple dues.

All this robbery of the people in the name of God, the just and merciful, and in his holy place, rose up before Jesus as he strode into the great outer Temple Court. Around him surged the crowds. They knew him as the prophet who had yesterday ridden in amid their shouts. His disciples were tense with excitement to see if he would even now bring in the new Kingdom.

The hour had come to cleanse the place. Stooping to pick up stray pieces of small cord dropped by the merchants, Jesus swiftly twisted them into a whip and cried out across the marble courtyard in a voice that stilled the hubbub:

'Away with you. This is my Father's House. It is written: "My House shall be called the House of Prayer." You turn it into a robbers' den.'

With a swift, decisive gesture, he gripped a money-changer's table and sent it whirling. The money went clanging across the marble flags. Panic seized the men. With crash after crash the tables were flung over by the fleeing money-changers. The animals with their drovers took flight

through the porch out into the open beyond. The pilgrim multitude tingled with joy at the putting to flight of the people who fleeced them. The Temple authorities knew that it was more than their life was worth to lay a hand on Jesus in face of the menace of that multitude. Dumb with fury and with their fingers itching to destroy Jesus, the money-changers, the merchants, even the priests were helpless.

He stood there, his eyes ablaze with a passion of love for God and the people. Around him the pilgrims gathered, more sure than ever that here was their Leader. The sons of some of the pilgrims—who had come up with their fathers to the Feast just as Jesus had when he was twelve years old—were thrilled with hero-worship as they saw Jesus' dauntless figure among the fleeing merchants and money-changers. These boys began to cheer, echoing the cry they had heard the evening before—'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

The priests were hot with rage, that there in their very domain Jesus should be acclaimed as 'the Son of David'.

'Do you not hear what these boys are shouting?' they asked him indignantly.

'Yes,' he answered, quoting Scripture as he always did in replying to the Temple scribes and priests and to Satan. 'Have you never read:

> ' "Thou hast perfected praise,
> Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings." '

CHAPTER LIV

BROKEN TRAPS

GATHERING the Twelve round him, Jesus walked through the colonnades on the north side of the Temple and went out of the north-western gate by the Tower of Antony. Passing into the city and down the streets to the Kidron they climbed the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Under the cover of the gathering darkness they went up under the olives to the village of Bethany.

In the village of Bethany were two homes where Jesus was welcome. One was the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. There he enjoyed the discipleship of good friends. The other was a big house belonging to a man named Simon. There, on one of the evenings before the Passover, it may have been the first evening after Jesus reached Jerusalem, Simon gave a dinner in his honour. It was a thrilling occasion, for Lazarus was there. His sister Martha brought in the dishes to the guests.

As Jesus reclined at the table, Mary, the sister of Martha and of Lazarus, came into the courtyard of the house and made her way into the hall. Was she not the same Mary whom Jesus had healed of daemon-possession in Magdala some months ago and purified of sin?[1] Now she was with her sister and brother in Bethany. She knew, not only from Jesus' lips, but from what her brother told her, how the leaders in the Temple were closing in upon Jesus and how near the end might well be. Jesus had given Mary all that made life worth living; he had saved her from evil ways, made her free and happy, and brought her brother Lazarus back to life. And now his enemies were on his track to slay him. No words could tell her love for him. So she made up her mind, on what

[1] So at least it seems to the author on weighing not only the probabilities of the narratives but the characters that are revealed in the different stories.

was the last opportunity she would ever have, to pour out her worship in a simple perfect act.

In her hand Mary carried a lovely jar full of pure, sweet-scented ointment. The jar was made of alabaster. The ointment, a pound weight of it, was of nard, an exquisite and very costly scent. It was made from the root and the lower stems of a plant, with spikes of purple four-stamened flowers, that grows only on mountain heights in North India. Found there with great difficulty, the nard was carried on camel-back up through the passes of Afghanistan and across Persia into the Roman Empire, and there regarded as the choicest of all elements in the most perfect ointment.

With a sharp stroke, Mary broke the jar and poured the ointment on Jesus' head. In the Roman Empire in those days it was a custom to break the flask that held the ointment that was poured on the head of a friend who was dead and to leave the flask in the place of burial. Some of the guests muttered angrily to one another. Judas Iscariot in particular grumbled bitterly.

'Why,' he demanded angrily, 'has the ointment been wasted like this? It might have been sold for over fifteen pounds and the money given to the poor?'

Mary shrunk back, dreadfully distressed under the brutal hail of criticism. Jesus swiftly and sharply defended her.

'Leave her alone,' he said. 'Why are you troubling her? She has done a lovely act to me.[2] For you always have the poor among you, and you can do acts of kindness to them whenever you will; but you will not always have me. She has done all that she could; she has perfumed my body in preparation for burial. I tell you truly, wherever the Good News is told all over the world, men will tell of what she has done in remembrance of her.'

[1] *Nardostachys Jatamansi*, of the order of Valerianaceae.

[2] This is the only time when the word καλός is used by the writers to convey a word used by Jesus—a word meaning 'beautiful' in the sense of perfect loveliness as well as nobility.

When she came to him at dinner at Magdala,[1] her hair hanging loose, revealing her shameful life, her body shaken with sobs, tears pouring down her cheeks, Mary poured the ointment on Jesus' feet—the act of courtesy carried out as a rule by a slave—and from that day she gave her pure love and loyalty to Jesus. When she came to him at dinner at Bethany, with quiet, simple grace, she poured her costly offering on his head—a lovely act of worshipful devotion.

Judas was bitterly wounded at being publicly rebuked by Jesus. He burned to be revenged.

Jesus spent only that night at Bethany. He left Jerusalem in the evening on all the four first days of that week[2] to pray and to rest on the Mount of Olives, either in the Bethany home or in the open under the trees. To sleep in Jerusalem would have meant death.

Caiaphas had already ordered his arrest. He dared not take Jesus prisoner by day in the Temple because of the enthusiasm of the pilgrims. For all the people—as Luke says—hung on his lips. To arrest him publicly would have set them aflame in riot. At night, however, under the cover of darkness, the Temple police could have tracked him down in Jerusalem, and put him into prison. So he went out on to the Mount.

It was cold at night on the hill-side, for the breeze from the Great Sea every evening whips across the hills. They were hardy young men, however, used to roughing it on the hills or on the lake. Wrapped in their woollen cloaks, Peter, Andrew, John, and the rest slept. Again and again, we find that when they tried to keep awake at night in the open air sleep always overcame them. During part of the night Jesus, as his custom was, took new strength in talking with his Father under the stars.

[1] See Chapter XXXVII.

[2] That is, on our Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Having spent the Sabbath (our Saturday) in Jericho, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on the colt on our Sunday and cleansed the Temple on the Monday. The present chapter covers Monday night and all day Tuesday.

Others, however, did not sleep till late that night. Caiaphas and his father-in-law, Annas, the men of the Sanhedrin, plucked their beards and knit their shaggy brows in perplexity. They must stop Jesus. He must be arrested and slain. But how arrest him? There they were baffled. They decided to start by trying to make him commit himself in discussion to saying things that would brand him as a rebel. If he so committed himself, they could arraign him for summary justice before Pilate, the Roman Governor. They framed their questions and appointed their deputation to wait upon Jesus as soon as he should arrive in the Temple next morning.

In the morning Jesus gathered his disciples round him, and set off from Bethany on the Mount of Olives along the path that they had followed the day before—over the ridge facing the Temple, down into the Kidron valley, and up the City hill into the great Court. Swiftly the news reached the Sanhedrin that Jesus had come. At once a deputation was got together—the priests, scribes, and elders. They came and seated themselves around him. The crowd of pilgrims pressed in behind with ears pricked to hear what passed. The priests went straight to the question of the cleansing of the Temple.

'Tell us,' they said, 'what authority you have for acting in this way? Who gave you that authority?'

Here, they naturally thought, was a poser for Jesus—an inescapable dilemma. For they themselves were the rulers in the Temple and the only authority over them was Rome.

'Well,' he replied, 'I will ask you a question. Tell me whether the baptism of John came from heaven or only from men?'

Their faces fell. The pilgrims in the crowd nudged each other with amused delight at their embarrassment. The priests murmured to one another in search of a reply.

'If we say "From heaven," he will ask "Why, then, did you not believe him?" If we say, "From men," this mob of pilgrims will stone us, for they are all certain that John was a prophet.'

Completely baffled, they were at last forced to stammer out 'We do not know whence it came.'

'Neither will I tell you,' replied Jesus calmly, 'what authority I have for acting as I do.'

The rulers had covered themselves with ridicule. Their trap was broken. Jesus, however, had done infinitely more than that. He had actually answered their question without giving them any power to arrest him.

How had he done it? Clearly he had shown that he knew his authority came from the same source as that of John —from God. Indeed, Jesus' question about John's authority went, with supreme genius, deeper still. It was in the very instant when John had baptized him in Jordan that Jesus had heard the Voice of God within him saying 'Thou art my Son'. Jesus' own authority—his own knowledge that he was the Son of God—had taken new birth from his experience at John's baptism.

Jesus' reply was one more example of his superb intellectual mastery as well as his piercing spiritual vision.

The rulers had made themselves ridiculous. They ruefully knew it and were furious. The pilgrims knew it and were delighted. But worse was to follow.

'Tell me what you think of this,' Jesus said to them. 'A man had two sons. To the elder he said:

' "Son, go and work in the vineyard to-day."

' "I will go, Sir," ' replied the son; but he did not do so. To the younger the father gave the same order.

' "No, father, I will not go," said the youth; but afterwards he changed his mind and actually went. Which of the two sons, I ask you, did his father's will?'

'The second,' they replied.

'I tell you,' Jesus answered with biting directness, 'that the very tax-collectors and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.'

Matthew (standing there by Jesus) and Mary of Magdala, now in Bethany, were shining happy examples of the truth of this.

'John showed you,' Jesus pursued, 'how to live the good life. They believed; but you refused to repent and believe him.'

Then, lifting his eyes and looking over the heads of the seated deputation to the crowd of pilgrims, he said: 'I will tell you a story.'

'A man planted a vineyard. He planted a thorn hedge round it,[1] and hewed a pit in the rock into which the grape-juice could run when the fruit was trodden in the wine-press; and built a watch-tower against thieves. He let it to some farmers and travelled abroad. When the fruit-harvest came and the time for receiving the rent, he sent one of his servants to take the share of the grapes from the vineyard. They thrashed him and sent him off with nothing at all. So the owner sent another servant. They beat him too and hurled insults at him and drove him away. A third they wounded and threw him out.

' "What shall I do?" the landlord asked himself.

' "Let me send my son whom I love; they will have some respect for him."

'The men whispered to one another as they saw him approaching.

' "Here comes the heir. Let us kill him; then the vineyard will become ours."

'So they cast him out of the vineyard and slew him. What will the owner do? Come and slay them and give the property to others.'

It was a perfect picture of what the high priests in Jerusalem had in earlier centuries done to God's prophets and were now plotting to do to his Son. Down in the Kidron valley below the Temple was, for instance, the tomb of Isaiah the prophet, whom the Temple authorities of his days had stoned to death.

[1] The prickly pear cactus is often used now for this purpose, and is even sometimes introduced into pictures of the life of Jesus; but it was not known in Palestine in his time. It was introduced there from South America by Spaniards in the sixteenth century.

'God forbid' ejaculated the priests, who knew that this story was meant for them.

'What, then,' asked Jesus, turning his eyes on them, 'does this writing mean?'

' "The stone that the builders rejected
Has now become the chief cornerstone.
Every one who falls on that stone will be destroyed,
And whomsoever it falls upon will be crushed." '

Jesus' marvellous mastery, the creative originality of his thought, its simplicity and soaring vision, left these men—the cleverest of their nation—with only one tool ready to hand—violence.

So enraged were they that they made as though they would lay hands on Jesus. One glance at the crowd, however, was enough. It showed them that they would pay for such action swiftly with their lives. For the multitude believed that Jesus was sent from God. The rulers shrank back. Baffled even of a physical attack on Jesus, they slunk away to plot by subtlety and treachery the triumph they were too cowardly to risk their lives in gaining by direct action.

'How can we do away with him?' they asked each other desperately. Only one power could master this mob which was on his side—the power of the Roman sword. Alongside and above the Temple enclosure loomed the garrison Tower of Antony. From where they sat the rulers of the Temple could see the brazen helmet of the soldier on sentry-go on the Tower.

'Let us send spies to Jesus who will pretend to be straightforward people and ask him such questions as will make him give answers that will be treason against Rome, so he will be subject to the condemnation of Governor Pilate.'

That was their new plan. This group of Pharisees, therefore, framed an extremely clever question. There seemed to be no escape from it. If Jesus answered one way the patriotic Jews would be against him; if he answered the other way, Rome could execute him for sedition. It was a deadly trap.

'Teacher,' they said, with mock respect and humility, in a clumsy attempt to stir Jesus to make a frank attack on the Roman taxes, 'we know that you are honest in what you say. You do not care about the approval of men; you openly and clearly tell us what is God's way. Tell us, is it permissible for us to pay tribute to Caesar or not?'[1]

The people hated the taxes and the *publicani* who collected them, not only because they were corruptly and oppressively collected, but because they went to support the rule of an alien, heathen Emperor. No one save children and old men escaped the poll-tax; and land and other property was taxed in addition. But it was the powerful Pharisee party that had (when Jesus was a boy) carried through the petition to the Emperor to depose Archelaus the Ethnarch, who succeeded Herod the Great, and for Caesar to rule Judaea himself directly from Rome. Rome had done this, and her rule brought protection from the Arab raider, good roads, greater security, better public order; while the pilgrims themselves came along roads protected by that peace and voyaged over seas freed by Rome from the infesting pirates, bringing to Jerusalem its wealth and Judaea her commerce.

'You playactors,' replied Jesus, tearing off his questioners' mask, 'why do you come to tempt me?'

The temptation that they spread before him was, of course, to court popularity by playing down to the people's hate of the taxes by denouncing the tribute. They had all the more hope of this, because they expected Jesus, who had ridden into the city as Messiah, to do as they imagined the Messiah would do—turn a rebellious face towards Rome.

'Show me a silver denarius,' Jesus went on. This was a coin issued by the Roman imperial mint, and had on one side the head of the Emperor and on the other side his Roman titles.

[1] The translation in the Authorized English Bible—'Is it lawful?'—does not convey the shade of intention of the original which lies between 'Is it permissible?' and 'Is it right?', but does not go so far as 'Is it ideally right?' on the one hand or 'Is it the law?' on the other.

One of them pulled a denarius from his money-bag and held it out.

'Whose face is carved on it?' Jesus asked. 'Whose inscription does it bear?'

'Caesar's,' the man replied.

The fact of the image of a ruler being stamped on a coin made it, from the point of view universally held in those days, the personal property of the ruler.

'Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar,' replied Jesus. Then the unexpected lightning stroke flashed on them—'And give God what belongs to God.'

They marvelled at his answer and were dumb. Their trap lay broken. They had no word that they could carry to the Roman governor against Jesus; and, in showing the reasonableness of paying tribute, he had said no word that would alienate the pilgrims' loyalty. Jesus had, in addition, given them a profound teaching that flung a new light on a man's duty for all time.

The early Christians were, after Jesus' death, held back by these words from rebelling against the Roman Empire even when persecuted. Jesus did not say either that Caesar's rule was wholly good nor that it was to go on always; but simply that, while Caesar ruled, men must render his dues to him.

The Pharisees being worsted, their rivals, the Sadducees—who were against the Pharisees in many things, but united with them against Jesus—came to him with a very complicated question about the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. This question Jesus answered, proving that the Sadducees had a very crude materialistic idea of what resurrection truly means. He showed that resurrection is essentially a spiritual life after death. He ended by quoting to them from the Scriptures that they themselves believed:

'Have you never read,' he asked, rallying the scholars with want of scholarship, 'what God says to you: "I am the God

of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."[1] He is not,' Jesus concluded, 'the God of dead, but of living men'—i.e. the God of those men living immortally in the spiritual world.

A scribe, who knew the Law of Moses through and through, then came to Jesus with a question.

'Master,' he asked, 'which is the great commandment in the Law?'

Jesus at once quoted the Shema, which every Jewish boy or man carried bound in his leather phylactery and repeated at every service.

'The first commandment,' he said, is:

> 'Hear, O Israel;
> The Lord, Our God, the Lord is one:
> And thou shalt love the Lord thy God
> With all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
> And with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'[2]

'The second,' he continued, 'is this:

> 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'[3]

'There is no other commandment greater than these. The whole of the Law and the Prophets is summed up in these two commandments.'

'Truly, Master,' replied the lawyer, 'you have well said that "He is one; and there is none other but he",[4] and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself is much more than all "whole burnt offerings and sacrifices".'[5]

When Jesus saw how wisely the lawyer replied, he said to him 'You are not far from the Kingdom of God.'

[1] Exodus iii. 6. [2] Deuteronomy vi. 4, 5. [3] Leviticus xix. 18.
[4] Deuteronomy iv. 35; vi. 4. [5] 1 Samuel xv. 22.

CHAPTER LV

GATES CLOSED AND OPENED

THE mass of the pilgrims listened with delight that day to the answers that Jesus gave to the rulers in the Temple, as they had rejoiced the day before when he cleansed the Temple. Now they listened to him as he made a scathing attack on the men who had tried to catch him out in his words. Yet at the same time he supported their proper authority.

'The Scribes and the Pharisees,' he said, 'sit in the chair of Moses. Obey them, then; but do not act as they do. They talk, but they do nothing. Heavy loads they bind up in bundles and load men's shoulders with them; but, as for doing anything themselves, they will not lift a finger to help. Besides, everything that they do is to attract men's notice.

'Beware, then,' he said to them, 'of the Scribes. They like to walk about in fine long robes, to swing gorgeous tassels, to wear broad phylacteries, to be saluted in the market-square with "Rabbi", to get the front seats in the meeting-houses and the best places at banquets; and all the time they prey upon the homes of widows and make a pretence with long prayers.'

Then he said to his disciples very earnestly:

'But you are not to be saluted as "Rabbi",
For one is your teacher and you are all brothers.
And call no one on earth "father",
For one is your Father—your heavenly Father;
Nor must you take the name of "leaders",
For one is your leader—the Christ.
He who is greatest among you must be your servant;
Whoever humbles himself will be lifted up.'

Then he turned upon the leaders of the people and arraigned them, not for what they did to him, but because

they were the great and tragic stumbling-block in the way of men going into the Kingdom of the Love of God. He said:

'Woe to you, you Scribes and Pharisees, playactors!
You slam the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in men's faces;
And you do not yourselves go in,
Nor do you let those go in who are on the point of entering.

'Woe to you, you Scribes and Pharisees, playactors!
You scour sea and land to make one convert.
And when you have won him
You make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves.

'Woe to you, you blind guides!
You say, "Swear by the holy place! and it means nothing;
But swear by the gold of the holy place, and it is a binding oath."
Blind fools! For which is greater?
The gold or the holy place that makes it sacred?
You say again, "Swear by the altar, it is nothing,
But swear by the offering upon the altar, and it is a binding oath."
Blind that you are! For which is the greater,
The offering or the altar that makes the offering holy?
He who swears by the altar
Swears both by it and everything on it;
He who swears by the holy place
Swears by it and by him who dwells in it;
And he who swears by Heaven
Swears both by the Throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, playactors!
For you are careful to pay a tenth even of the little herbs—mint, dill, and cummin.[1]
But you neglect the more important demands of the Law,
Justice, mercy, and straight dealing.
These latter you ought to have done, and not leave the former undone.
You blind guides!
Straining out the gnat while you gulp down the camel!

[1] Dill and cummin are small umbelliferous plants whose seeds are used for flavouring bread and as medicine.

'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, playactors!
For you wash clean the outside of the cup and the dish,
But inside you are filled with greed and self-indulgence.
Blind Pharisee, first wash clean the inside of the cup and dish,
Then the outside will be clean also.

'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, playactors!
For you are like white-washed graves.
The outside pleases the eye,
But inside they are full of dead men's bones and all rottenness.
In the same way you seem to men to be good,
But inside you are full of insincerity and wickedness.'

So Jesus, after those swift pictures of the man pouring his drink through muslin to strain out the gnat and swallowing a camel, and industriously washing the outside of a cup while leaving the inside dirty, told the Scribes and Pharisees of their unhappy plight. They had, he said, scourged and persecuted the men who came to them with the news of the goodness of God, and they had led the nation astray. He had longed that the nation gathered there in Jerusalem at the Passover should accept the Good News that he came to bring.

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' he cried,

'Who murders the prophets,
And stones those who have been sent to you!
How often would I have gathered your children to me.
Just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings;
And you would not come.
See, your house will now be left to you desolate,
For, I tell you,
You will never see me again until you say,
"Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord."'

Jesus went from the Terrace and sat down under the shadow of the cloisters in the Court of the Women.

Along the walls were thirteen curious chests. They were shaped like trumpets, with the small end at the top and the

large end at the bottom. These were for receiving the gifts of the pilgrims. Trumpets I and II, for instance, were for the half-shekel Temple-tribute. Into Trumpet III women dropped their money to pay for a burnt-offering in gratitude to God for making their children well after illness or some other thing that made them glad and thankful. There were also Trumpet-chests for free-will offerings.

Jesus sat watching the ever-moving panorama of human beings going to and fro. A rich man, dressed in splendid robes, went by, and with a lordly gesture threw a handful of money into the free-will chest. Then a woman, poorly dressed in widow's robes, all darned and patched, took out two tiny coins—*lepta* or mites, as they were called, which she had painfully saved. They did not total a halfpenny. Jesus noticed her. He had just been speaking of how the Scribes preyed on the houses of widows. He thought of the sufferings of his own widowed mother. His chivalry towards the downtrodden made him pay special attention to her.

He called Peter and the others.

'See,' he said quietly to them, 'this poor widow has cast in more than all those who are throwing their money into the treasury. For they are just giving something from their surplus income. She, out of her poverty, has thrown in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'

In those two days Jesus had seen two perfect lovely deeds —two only, and each of them a silent gesture of sacrifice by a woman. Amid all the tricks of the rulers trying meanly to trip him and trap him with questions and to torment him with their carping criticism, two shining jewels shone out. Mary had given all that she could in breaking the alabaster flask, to pour upon him a royal anointing of purest spikenard, and a woman—a widow in direst poverty—had cast into the Temple treasury all that she had for the worship of God. Jesus, by what he saw in their deeds and said of them, has placed them in the world's temple of immortal beauty.

As Jesus saw and did and said these things, a group of men

from overseas was watching him. They were not Palestine Jews, but Greeks.[1] They had given up the worship of Zeus and Herakles, Aphrodite or Artemis. They had come to believe that God is one and invisible, holy and just, and merciful; that he had given the world his law through Moses, and that he spoke his will from time to time through heroic men—prophets with lips touched with divine fire for the good of men. They had, in a word, adopted the Jewish worship. These Greeks had sailed across the Great Sea to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple at the time of the Passover. They heard Jesus teaching. They saw his heroic cleansing of the Temple. They were sure that he spoke the very truth of God, that he knew God in a deeper, truer, fuller way than they did. They quickened with intense desire to speak with him, to know him better. So they wanted to talk personally with him.

They were too modest to thrust themselves forward and come directly to speak to him. So they waited for an opportunity to have a word with one of the disciples. They found Philip of Bethsaida the easiest of the Twelve to approach. His name was a Greek one. It is therefore likely that his parents also were Greeks who had adopted the Jewish way of worship. The Greeks said to Philip:

'We wish to see Jesus.'

Philip was a cautious, unadventurous man. He had shown this when Jesus, just a year before, asked him how they were going to find food for the multitude. So Philip went and consulted Andrew, the only other Apostle, curiously enough, with a Greek name. So they went together, Andrew taking the lead, and said to Jesus:

'Here are some Greeks who wish to see you.'

The heart of Jesus was thrilled. It was a wonderful moment for him. The Temple leaders of the Jewish nation had set their faces like flint against him. They were plotting and setting traps for him; scheming his destruction; hound-

[1] See Appendix: note 7.

ing him to death. They were clanging in his face and bolting and barring the doors of the Jewish nation through which his Good News of the love of God could go to all men everywhere. Suddenly these Greeks, men from the great nations and lands beyond the frontiers of Palestine and beyond the limits of the Jewish people, swung greater gates wide open—gates that led out to the whole world. Jesus saw in the faces of those Greeks, looking eagerly to him for light, the promise of what actually happened a very few years later. His Good News—rejected in Jerusalem—went out into all lands in the speech of those men—the Greek tongue—the *lingua franca* of the world of that day. It was one of the great shining moments of light and joy in Jesus' life.[1]

'The time has come,' Jesus cried aloud, 'for the Son of Man to be glorified.'

Then, turning to the Greeks, he spoke to them some of the simplest and profoundest of all his immortal words. He saw that, though he was in a very few days to die, yet through his death and new life, in such followers as these Greeks, a world harvest of his Good News would grow to feed the whole race of man.

'Truly, truly, I tell you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain; but if it dies, it gives a rich harvest. He who loves his own life loses it, while he who cares nothing for his own life in this world will preserve it for immortal life.'

> 'If a man is ready to serve me, let him follow me,
> And where I am there will my servant be also;
> If a man is ready to serve me
> My Father will honour him.'

Then the whole torture of the approaching death wrenched his spirit. 'If it dies.' He was now to die. Words escaped

[1] The story of this spreading of the Good News in the Greek tongue across the Roman Empire is told in a book by Luke, who too, bore a Greek name, who also wrote one of the four books about Jesus. It is called *Acts of Apostles.*

his lips such as had never before passed them—words that show the turmoil of his own spirit.

'My soul is full of trouble,' he said. 'What am I to say: "Father, save me from this hour?" Nay, but it is for this very purpose that I have come to this hour.'

Then, gathering his spiritual force in one supreme heroic self-offering, he lifted his hands to the heavens and cried, 'Father, glorify thy name.'

A sound as of thunder came. The crowd said that it was thunder. Some, however, said, 'No, an angel spoke to him.' The words that spoke from the unseen to Jesus' soul at that instant were the Voice of God saying 'I have glorified it and will also glorify it again.'

He had given the Good News of the Kingdom to his own nation, for them to give to the world. But their leaders rejected him and were even now plotting his death. But his faith triumphed over this seeming defeat. The call of the Greeks was in his ears, 'We would see Jesus.' The Voice of God was in his soul. Jesus was caught up to the highest peak of vision. When men had slain him on the cross all the world would see Jesus and could see and glorify God through him. So he cried in triumphant faith the last words that he was to speak to the world:

> 'Now is the world on trial,
> Now will the Prince of this world be driven out.
> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
> Will draw all men to myself.'

CHAPTER LVI

THE GREAT SURPRISE

JESUS now turned to leave the Temple with his men. He had ended his last open teaching of his Good News. His last public clash with the rulers was over. They would kill him, he knew; but the truth of God would conquer, that he knew too. The riches, the might, the wonder of the Temple seemed immortal. Jesus was without any wealth and was rejected by the men who ruled in that Temple. But he knew that his rule would draw the loyalty of men over the whole earth when that Temple was gone.

To his disciples that was not at all clear. They went out and turned down on the south side, walking down the stone-stepped road that plunged steeply to the Kidron ravine. Looking up to the left, Simon and Andrew, John and James were again overwhelmed, as they might well be, with the stupendous might and majesty of those superb buildings. They looked up at the walls that at that corner reared their height over four hundred feet above the winter torrent. Some of the stones were sixty feet long and twenty feet square. Above the walls were the roofs of the colonnades and the golden roof over the Holy of Holies.

'Look, Master,' they said, struck with awe again, 'how great these stones and how wonderful these buildings are!'

'You see these mighty buildings,' Jesus replied, 'not one stone shall be left on another without being torn down.'

They gasped in incredulous amazement. It was beyond belief that what he said should come about. How could all that mighty structure be hurled down in ruin? Yet it came to be not many years later; so that the very bed of the Kidron ravine itself is now ninety feet higher than when Jesus crossed it that day, for it is filled up with the chaotic debris of those walls thrown down by siege.

As Jesus and his disciples crossed the ravine and climbed

the other side, the disciples knit their brows and puzzled their brains to try to conceive how and when the catastrophe that Jesus had foretold could come to pass. When they had climbed the Mount to a place high up opposite the Temple, they gathered close to Jesus and asked him privately about it.

'Tell us,' they said, 'when is this to happen? What will be the sign to show us that all this is about to come to pass?'

'Take care that no one misleads you,' Jesus answered. 'Many will come assuming my name, saying "I am he," and they will mislead many. But when you hear of wars and rumours of wars do not be alarmed. These have to come, but the end is not yet. For,' and he quoted Isaiah's words,[1] '"Nation will rise in arms against nation and kingdom against kingdom." In various places there will be earthquakes and famines too. That, however, is only the beginning of the pangs of birth.'

Jesus foreshadowed in these words what in fact came to be in the years that were to follow his death.

Jesus could see that the Jewish idea of a national Messiah, put into practice, meant a tragic and hideous conflict with the Roman Empire. To defy Rome would bring her irresistible might to crush Jerusalem to powder and scatter her people[2] all over the earth. What Jesus saw as inevitable took place.

'Look to yourselves,' he went on; 'men will hand you over to Sanhedrins. You will be flogged in synagogues and brought up for trial before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness to them. But the Good News must be proclaimed to all the nations before the end.'

Many other things Jesus said to them at that time. In the record that was written down years later, the authors—living among great horrors—took some of the violent pictures of catastrophe that they found in the prophets and, without

[1] Isaiah xix. 2.

[2] After a Jewish rebellion in A.D. 65–6, when the Romans were driven out of Jerusalem, the city was invested—forty years after Jesus spoke (March 1, 70)—by Titus. By July 8 the Temple was a mass of ruins encumbered with burnt corpses. It has never been rebuilt.

knowing it, confused these in their memory with the pictures that Jesus gave to them. What he did certainly tell them was that no man could know the days and times when these horrors would happen; but that all men must be alert and pray. For no man knows when his time will come. He said:

'There will be two men in the field,
One will be taken and one will be left;
Two women will be grinding the domestic mill,
One will be taken and one will be left.'

'Be on the watch, then, for you never know what day your Lord will come. Be certain of this, that if the householder had known at what hour of the night the thief was coming he would have been on his guard and would not have let his house be broken into. So be prepared yourselves, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect it.'

Jesus went on to tell one of his stories to the disciples as they lay around him on the hill-side that afternoon in the spring sunshine. It was to illustrate this command of his: 'Be prepared.'

'The Kingdom of Heaven,' he said, 'will be found to be like ten bridesmaids who took their saucer-lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. For although the foolish ones took their lamps they did not take any oil with them, whereas the wise ones took oil in their flasks as well as their lamps. As the bridegroom was a long time coming, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep.

'At midnight, however, there was a loud cry, "The bridegroom. Come out and meet him!" Then all the bridesmaids roused themselves and trimmed their lamps. "Give us some of your oil," said the foolish to the wise, "for our lamps are flickering out." "No," answered the wise, "for there will not be enough for us and for you. Go to the shops and buy some for yourselves." While, however, they went off to

buy oil, the bridegroom came. Those bridesmaids who were ready went in with him to the wedding-banquet and the door was shut. Afterwards the other bridesmaids came and cried "Oh, sir; oh, sir, do open the door for us." "I tell you frankly," he replied, "I do not know you."

'Keep on the watch, then,' concluded Jesus, 'for you know neither the day nor the hour.'

Peter and the others recognized in the picture the weddings of their own families and towns. Generally the wedding was in the evening, so that friends from far away could be sure of arriving, and so that those who had to work during the day would be free to come. The marriage was usually in the bridegroom's house; but, during the preparations, he stayed away the whole day with his companions. In the evening he started with his friends along the dark bazaars or village street. Lamps, lanterns, and torches were lighted to guide him and his comrades. The neighbours along the way who were waiting raised the cry, 'The Bridegroom comes,' which could be heard in the silent night long before he reached the house. The waiting bridesmaids went out with their lamps to meet him. The onlookers went home in the darkness, but the friends and relatives of the bridegroom went in to the banquet.

'The situation,' Jesus went on, 'is that of a merchant going on a voyage who called his slaves and gave his goods into their charge. He handed five talents to one, two to another, to a third he gave one talent, according to the ability of each.[1] Then he set out on his travels. The servant who had the five talents went at once and traded with them: he made another five. So, too, the man who had received two talents made another two. The servant, however, who had got one talent went and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's

[1] There was a Phoenician talent and a Greek talent. Jesus, it seems certain, meant the Greek or Attic talent which the Romans had accepted side by side with their own currency. It was worth 6,000 denarii, or about £240. Thus the first servant had some £1,200 to handle, the second nearly £500, the third £240.

money. After a long absence the master of these men returned and made up his accounts with them. The servant who had got five talents came up and brought five more.

' "You handed me," he said, "five talents, sir; here I have brought five more."

' "Well done, good and faithful servant!" cried the master. "You have been trustworthy with a small sum; now I will place a larger one in your hands. Come and share your master's feast."

'At this the one who had received the two talents came forward. He said:

' "Sir, you trusted me with two talents; look, I have made another two!"

' "Well done, good and faithful servant," said the master. "You have been trustworthy with a small sum; now I will place a larger one in your hands. Come and share your master's feast."

'The servant who had received one talent now came forward.

' "I knew, sir," he said, "that you were a hard man; you reap where you have not sown, and gather up what you have not winnowed; and, being afraid, I went and hid your money in the ground. There is what belongs to you!"

' "You wicked and slothful servant!" the master cried. "You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather up what I have not winnowed? Very well; you ought to have passed my money on to the bankers, and I should, on returning, have got back my money with interest. So take away from him the talent that he has and give it to the one who has ten talents. For to each one who has, more shall be given in abundance; but as for him who has nothing, even what he has shall be taken. As for this good-for-nothing slave, throw him into the darkness outside—there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." '

Andrew and Simon, John and James, as they listened to this story would see its meaning all the more clearly as they

remembered how it differed from the similar story that Jesus had told only the previous week down in Jericho.[1]

For in this Parable of the Talents, first of all the merchant gives to each of his three slaves large and different amounts of money with which they can trade; and he grades the amounts in proportion to the ability of the men—of which he is already aware. In the Parable of the Pounds, on the contrary, the hero of the story was not a merchant but a prince and he did not know the differing ability of his servants. He gave small and exactly equal amounts to each of ten men, not in order to make money—as in the Talents story—but precisely in order to discover their differing capacity. For his aim was to find the best men to serve him in the kingdom that he expected to gain and did gain. Not only are there all these fundamental differences between the stories, but also, in the new story of the Talents, the reward to the two good servants is identical, because their reward depends, not on the men's capacity, but on the zeal with which they serve their master in using what gifts they have. Each man in this story has shown equal zeal with his differing gift; so each man gets the same reward. In the Parable of the Pounds, on the contrary, the rewards to the servants differ in proportion to their varied success in using the same amount.[2]

So the Twelve saw from this new story of the Talents that in the Kingdom of God differences of gifts or of opportunity, or even of result, do not make any difference to the reward. The reward depends on loving, enthusiastic work for the master. The reward to such people is not ease, but more work; larger responsibilities with greater opportunities of finer service and, above all, enjoying the personal friendship of the master: 'Share you master's board'; whereas the punishment of slackness and of selfish indifference is to lose

[1] See Chapter LII.

[2] It is amazing when we see that the details and the meaning of the two stories are so very sharply contrasted that many critics should say that these are two records of the same story.

by atrophy the gift that one already has and to be isolated from the laughter and joy of the feast with him.

The sun was now lower in the western sky. In a few moments it would set behind the Temple facing them across the Kidron ravine. As they sat there on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the rays flashed on the golden roof of the Temple so that it shone like a heavenly throne.

On the left a slow cloud of smoke drifted over the shoulder of the Hill of David. (It came from Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom, in which burned the City incinerating fire on to which Jerusalem every day cast its rubbish—a fire that never went out; everlasting fire.)

Up the valley came—as they come at that time of the afternoon every day every year—the flocks of black goats and white sheep. The lambs and the kids, the sheep and the goats were all mingled together. In front of them all walked the shepherd. So they came to a couple of folds. There the shepherd stopped, and standing in front of his advancing flock waved his staff first to the right and then to the left, guiding a sheep this way, and a goat that. In a very few minutes he had divided the sheep from the goats. Up and down the hill opposite, and up and down the paths of the Mount of Olives, where they were sitting, thousands of pilgrims from every land walked and talked or went about their business of preparing to celebrate.

Jesus wanted to give to his disciples in one supreme picture God's standard in his judgement of men in the Kingdom of Heaven. So he swiftly took that scene that lay before him. Out of its simple elements he made an immortal picture on the canvas of eternity. Across the ravine the roof of the Holy of Holies—a golden throne; in the valley the shepherd with his goats and sheep; on the hill-sides the pilgrims from all the nations; on his left the smoke of the undying fire of Gehenna and on the Mount himself. So Jesus pictured the judgement that goes on every day in all the lives of men. He told the last of his immortal parables, the story of the Great Surprise.

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory,' Jesus said, 'and all the angels with him, then will he sit on the throne of his glory and all nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate them one from another, as this shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, setting the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, my Father's blessed ones, come into your heritage in the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

'For I was hungry, and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you gave me a welcome;
I was ill-clad and you clothed me;
I was sick and you came to see me;
I was in prison and you visited me.'

' "When, Lord," the just will reply, "did we see you hungry and fed you? or thirsty and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger and gave you a welcome, and ill-clothed and clothed you? When did we see you ill or in prison and visit you?"

' "In very truth, I tell you," the King will reply, "in so far as you did this to one of these brothers of mine, even to the least of them, you have done it to me."

'Then the King will say to those on his left, "Begone from me, you accursed ones, to the eternal fire made ready for the devil and his angels.

'"For I was hungry, but you gave me no food;
I was thirsty, but you gave me nothing to drink;
I was a stranger, but you never welcomed me;
I was ill-clad, but you never clothed me;
I was sick and in prison, but you never came to visit me."

' "Lord," they, too, will answer, "when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger or ill-clothed, or sick or in prison and did not come to serve you?" Then he will reply:

'"In very truth, I tell you, in so far as you did it not to one of these, even the least of them, you did it not to me."

'So they shall go away into the eternal punishment, but the just to eternal life.'

Then Jesus turned suddenly to his disciples.

'You know,' he said, 'the Passover is to be held two days from now, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'

CHAPTER LVII

THE TRAITOR

NIGHT fell. Jesus with his men went up the slope of the Mount. There, wrapped in their woollen cloaks, they slept under the olives.

The next day was for them a time of calm after the tornado of the first three days of the week. For in those first three days Jesus had come up from Jericho to Jerusalem walking knowingly towards death, lonely at the head of an excited multitude of pilgrims who expected him to become King. He had entered the city with the clamour of the welcome of thousands about his ears; he had cleansed the Temple-market; he had met triumphantly the trickery and hate of the rulers; and now he had given to his men the last and greatest vision of the Kingdom.

Between those stormy, exhausting days and the menacing thunder-clouds that massed on the horizon ahead came this day of becalmed quiet.[1] In those hours two silent, secret things were done. They prepared the setting of to-morrow's awful crisis.

Judas crept quietly away, pretending an errand. Alone he climbed up to Caiaphas' palace on the southern hill. There he asked audience of the High-Priest and of his father-in-law, Annas. Judas was led into their presence. They asked his business.

'I am one of the twelve disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, whose arrest you have ordered. What are you ready to give me if I show you how you may take him?'

Their cold, haughty faces lighted with cruel joy at the words. They grasped eagerly at this unexpected eleventh-hour opportunity to destroy Jesus before the Passover. Yet their miserly habit ruled even then.

[1] Wednesday according to the present Western reckoning.

'Thirty pieces of silver,' they replied to Judas. It was according to the Law the blood-money to be paid as fine for having wounded a slave.[1]

For what were they giving these shekels? What had Judas to betray? Jesus had been hailed with shouts by the multitude of pilgrims as the Messiah from God. But he had not said in clear words that he was the Christ. To wring that from Jesus' lips was—as we shall see—Caiaphas' first aim. For, if Jesus said that he was Messiah, Caiaphas could charge him before Pilate with claiming to be King. Judas could tell Caiaphas what no one in Jerusalem except the Twelve had ever heard from Jesus' own lips, that he had admitted—when Peter acclaimed him as the Christ—that such he was.

Caiaphas' central need, however, was to arrest Jesus when no pilgrims were about. That could only be at night. Jesus, we remember, had kept his place of rest at night-time secret by going out of the city to sleep on the Mount of Olives each evening. Judas could show the high-priest's police where Jesus could be captured at night when the pilgrims were asleep.

So Judas arranged to betray Jesus' place of retreat for a money bribe. Why should he do so? He was a disciple, chosen by Jesus. He had had in him the making of a great messenger of the Good News. If it were not so, Jesus, who refused so many half-hearted folk as disciples, would not have called him into the trusted circle of the Twelve. Jesus had trusted Judas, because of his business ability, with the bag in which the group kept the little money that they had for buying food in the villages and towns to which they came. When a temptation came to take for himself some of the money, Judas began to give way. He gave way to it bit by bit till he became a dishonest slave of avarice. When he saw Mary pour the precious ointment on the head of Jesus,

[1] About £4 16*s.* 0*d.* in English money. As blood-money for a slave, see Exodus xxi. 32. It seems a very small amount. It was, however, in those days, equal to five or six months' wage for a Jewish field labourer.

Judas' practical business sense had at once seen the large sum of money wasted—thrown away. But, beyond that, Judas' avarice saw that if that money had been in their common purse some of it could be diverted quietly to his own money-bag.

Jesus, again, had sharply rebuked Judas at the supper for criticizing Mary. Judas' pride was wounded at being publicly reprimanded in that way and, worst of all, reproved by a Galilean among Judaeans in his own country.

Avarice and wounded pride, then, were egging Judas on. But a far stronger motive was needed to transform the disciple into the active, dastardly traitor. Was it not that, like some of the other disciples, Judas was a nationalist and personally ambitious and saw here a double way of serving his patriotism and his lust of power? When Jesus should become King with his court and throne at Jerusalem he wanted a high place of office—the treasurership for preference. Judas had been buoyed up, when they entered Jerusalem four days ago, by the hope that at last Jesus would become King. He now saw with horror and disgust that Jesus was heading, not for rule, but for death—and the shameful death of a criminal at that. If Judas betrayed Jesus without Jesus knowing it, then either Jesus would fight with supernatural forces and become King and restore the Jews to their freedom and Judas would be treasurer; or Jesus would be killed, which in that case was his own fault.

Judas, however, had one other burning passion. He had writhed for months under the fact that whenever Jesus had some task of special difficulty or sensitiveness—like the call of Jairus to heal his daughter—or when he went aside in some special crisis—as to the Mount of Transfiguration after Caesarea Philippi—it was always Simon Peter and John and James whom Jesus chose. Never Judas. His pride was wounded and his ambition was foiled by the knowledge that those uncouth Galilean fishermen would certainly rank above him—the Judaean—in the Kingdom, if it did come. He

had a real affection for Jesus, as we shall see, and this would naturally make a man of his type jealous.

Certainly it was not greed of money alone that led Judas to betray his Master. A man of his business capacity would have wrung twenty times thirty pieces of silver from the inexhaustible treasure-coffers of the high priests, if wealth alone had been his motive. Annas and Caiaphas desired intensely to rid themselves of the menace of Jesus. They would have paid any price to get him in their grip. No; Judas was an ordinary practical selfish young man who wanted to succeed in life at all costs, and who was maddened as he felt himself slighted and saw all his plans crumble in the dust. Judas was inflamed by avarice, by wounded pride, by burning jealousy, by lust of power, and by disappointed ambition—all at once.

The second silent and secret thing carried through on that day was done by Jesus. He felt the meshes of Caiaphas' net closing round him and he saw into the workings of Judas' tortuous mind.

He wanted, before the end came, to take the Passover supper with his comrades. He knew that this meal would be the last supper that he and they would share. It must take place in Jerusalem to be a true Passover celebration as pilgrims. But it must be in a secret place to escape being interrupted by arrest. Jesus wanted the meal in peace and quietness, in some secure homelike place where he could open his heart and mind to the men. How could he arrange it?

There was a follower of Jesus in Jerusalem named Mary. Her husband—whose name we do not know—had a good-sized house in the city with a large upper room. These friends of Jesus could therefore well entertain so large a group as Jesus and the Twelve. They had a son, a full-grown youth. He had both a Hebrew and a Latin name, being called John Marcus.[1] These were true friends to Jesus.

[1] He later became the writer of the Gospel that bears his name, using in part material that came to him from, or was dictated to him directly by

He could trust their loyalty to the full. They would never betray him. Jesus, then, went to these friends to ask them to lend him their upper room for his supper with the Twelve. He arranged with them that he should bring his disciples under cover of darkness the next evening to their home.

It was important that it should not be publicly known that Jesus was going there. Indeed, even the disciples must not know the place arranged until they reached it. For if they knew it, Judas, as one of them, could lead Caiaphas' police-officers there and break in upon the supper itself to arrest Jesus.

Jesus arranged with their host that, before the actual time when the meal was to take place, he should send on two of his disciples with the food in order to get it ready. The disciples were to find the house by an ingenious signal. It is very rare indeed for a man to carry a water-jar in Palestine, for it is always thought of as a woman's work.[1] But it is a thing that a man can do without calling special attention to himself, because a man may at times be without any women-kind to help him, and therefore be obliged to fetch his own supply of water from the spring. Jesus, therefore, arranged that at the appointed hour his host and hostess should send one of their men-slaves, carrying a water-jar, to wait inside a certain gate of the city so that he could lead them to the house.

Simon Peter. The youth Mark had neither heard nor followed Jesus, Papias says. From the fact that Peter calls him 'my son' (1 Peter v. 13) it seems likely that Mark became a Christian under Peter's influence. When Peter escaped from prison, he hurried at once to Mark's mother's house (Acts xii), because a number of Christians were together there. The mention of a porch and the large upper room and the slave-girl Rhoda suggest that it was a large house. John Mark travelled later with his older cousin Barnabas, as well as with Paul.

[1] The author was walking in Nazareth towards the Virgin's Fountain in 1927 with a friend who has lived for over thirty years in Palestine and knows the life of the people with extraordinary intimacy. Suddenly she cried: 'See that man; he is carrying a water-jar. That is only the second time that I have seen that done during the whole of my life in Palestine.' The photograph reproduced in the next chapter (Pl. XXIX) was taken on that occasion.

That night Jesus and his men all slept again on the Mount of Olives. High over them the Passover moon, now almost full, swung slowly across the sky, sending rays through the leaves to dapple the earth with whiteness. Simon and John and the others slept too. But the sleep of a man with a tormented conscience is uneasy; nor could there easily be a greater torture for Judas' waking eyes than to see a moon ray lighten the face of his Master, the Lord, whom he had followed, but whom he would to-morrow betray to death by torture.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE CHOSEN WAY

AS the night wore on, the bivouac fires of the pilgrims on the hills around Jerusalem sank and their glow paled. The jackals gave tongue as they slunk out of their lairs in search of prey. The Passover moon went down behind the Temple. At last the dawn threw rays of light over the ridge of the Mount of Olives.

At once the hills and the city were a hurry and a confused stir, like the busy turmoil of a disturbed ant-heap. All the world was preparing for the Passover. Many thousands of lambs for the sacrifice bleated in their pens, while doves cooed in their cages. The priests organized their services.

With prancing cavalry at his side and behind him, the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, came up the long road from Caesarea on the coast. His horses' hooves echoed under the deep arches of the gate as he stormed through into Jerusalem and clanged up the narrow street to the Praetorium, scattering the pilgrims. Pilate's soldiers, on sentry-go on the battlements of the Tower of Antony close by, kept their scornful watch over the Temple Courts.

In a swaying litter, surrounded by silken curtains, Herod Antipas was carried by slaves up from Tiberias, followed by a long train of servants and baggage on camels and donkeys. He turned in at the Joppa gate and entered under the heavy arches of the palace that his dread father had built.

As the noonday came and afternoon drew on, Jesus said to Peter and John:

'Go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it.'[1]

'Where would you wish us to go and make ready?' they asked.

[1] For discussion of the very important question of the date and nature of this supper see Appendix: note 8.

Judas was listening. It was well that Jesus had taken his precautions.

It was still a day and some hours before the actual Passover; that is, the Passover Feast would actually begin at sunset of the next day. But the Passover that year was on the Sabbath. Some Jews, when that happened, ate the Passover a whole day earlier, so that they should not do the Passover cooking after sunset when the Sabbath began.

Jesus knew that the Sanhedrin meant to kill him before the Feast day. But he wished to keep the Feast with his beloved comrade-disciples. He wished to leave with them an act in which his followers could share together in remembrance of him during all the years to come and with him really there. So he put the Passover Supper forward by a day, as could rightly be done when the true Passover was on a Sabbath day.

'Go into the city,' Jesus replied to the disciples' question. 'When you have entered the gate you will meet a man carrying a water-jar. Follow him. Whatever house he enters, tell the goodman of the house, "The Master says, 'Where is my guest-room, that I may eat the Passover there with my disciples?'" He will himself show you a large room upstairs with couches placed all ready. Prepare the Passover for us there.'

Each taking a wicker basket containing provision for the supper, the two men set out from the Mount of Olives to the city. Jesus remained on the Mount of Olives.

A man-slave, bearing a water-jar and waiting inside the city gate, saw two Galilean men coming towards him. One was very young, a lithe, brown-skinned, keen-eyed, beardless youth, swift and sensitive; the other a sturdy, black-haired, shaggy-bearded man of barely thirty years, with smouldering fire in his eyes, and making impulsive vigorous gestures with his muscular arms and strong hands as he talked. John and Simon Peter came towards the water-bearer. They saw at once that this was the man of whom Jesus had

'You will meet a man carrying a water-jar.'
(For explanation see foot-note in Chapter LVII, p. 381.)

had eaten in haste as they started out of Egyptian slavery under Pharaoh into freedom. The lamb, free from blemish, the goodman of the house had already secured; and it was put into the oven to roast.

Meanwhile, as the sun set, Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives under the two mighty cedars that kept sentinel duty on the ridge and gathered his men to start across the Kidron. He looked his last on the long and well-loved ridge of this Mount that he had walked as a boy of twelve years old. He had, in the intervening years, returned to its steep, winding paths again and again. He had found rest and calm and cool winds under its trees away from the clamour and fret of the city and the harsh strife of the Temple. He knew every olive tree as a friend whose gnarled and twisted grey trunk had rested his back and whose myriad little silvery green leaves had shaded him from the sun.

He looked along the trodden way to his left, that curved back over the ridge to Bethany—the way to friendship in the little home of Mary and Martha. He looked along the other way to his right that climbed the hills of Judaea and Samaria, climbed to the sunny Lake and the happy hills of Galilee. He was free to take either one or the other, and to go in peace.

He looked in front, down the path that plunged into the ravine by the tall, dark cypresses and the dense, ancient olive trees of the Garden of the Olive Press, Gethsemane, and across the brook to the steep ascent to Jerusalem. It led to the hate of the priests, the cruelty of the soldiery, the torture of a hideous, lingering death. He took that way and neither of the others. For the love of his Father and his friends and of the world, he went into the Valley of that Shadow. He did it knowing what he did and what it meant. In the full prime and vigour of manhood, with the joy of life tingling in his veins, his soul thrilling to the beauty of flowers and birds, of children's faces and voices, he went deliberately,

step by step, down the hill and up into the city, to meet the last enemy face to face.

It was the will of his Father.

Greater courage has no man than that, nor greater love.

CHAPTER LIX

THE LAST SUPPER

AS they climbed up the other side into Jerusalem, it was already dusk. Going through the city gate, they turned to the way to the house. There the goodman welcomed Jesus and his men and led them into the courtyard. The Passover moon was rising in the already star-sown sky. The cold breeze began to come up out of the west. The door opened into the great upper room. The lighted lanterns hung from wall-brackets. They went in. The door was closed. They took off their sandals and set them aside by the wall near the door. The last supper began.

It was a private dinner arranged for Jesus and the Twelve in the house of a friend, but without the friend being present. So there was no slave there to carry out the usual courtesy of washing the dust of travel from the feet of the guests. The basin, however, with the water-jug and the towel were there. Who should be the servant to cleanse the feet of the guests? Caught in the net of their pride, the Twelve all held back from volunteering to do the slave's task.

There were the tables arranged. But how should the disciples sit? In what order? The highest in rank always expected to sit by the host. Only a few days ago the Sons of Thunder had infuriated the others by asking through their mother, Salome, for the seats on either side of Jesus in his Kingdom. Yet they were the youngest—the upstarts! Matthew was the richest. Peter was the one chosen for difficult tasks. John was greatly loved. Who was to take the lowest place? Blinded by their petty pride the group of young men at the opening of their last meal with their Master began to argue with hot words which was to be thought of as the greatest. Was he to be the oldest, or the one of highest family rank; or the richest, or the one dearest to Jesus. Jesus might well have been heart-broken or angry

at such bickering in face of the terrible things that lay ahead. He simply rebuked them in words like those on the other side of the Jordan[1] that they had so soon forgotten. He said:

'The Kings of the Nations rule over them.
Their tyrants take the title "Benefactor".
With you it is not so.
Let the greatest among you be as the younger,
Let the leader be like the one who serves.
Which is the greatest, he who sits at the table or he who waits on him?
Is it not the guest?
But I am among you as one who waits on others.'

He saw how utterly ashamed of themselves the fellows were, and he added:

'You, however, have stood by me amid my trials. So, even as my Father has promised to give me a Kingdom, I promise to give you the right of eating and drinking at my table in my Kingdom.'

They had now taken their places. On the couch on Jesus' right was John, and beyond John round the corner of the table, Peter. On Jesus' left was Judas. Jesus stood to put into deeds the words that he had said, that he was among them as one who waits on them—as a slave. He put off his outer robe. He knotted a towel about his waist like the slave who habitually washed the dust of the road from the feet of guests. He took up the jar and poured some fresh water into the basin.

One by one, he washed the dust of the day's walking from his disciples' feet. He washed the feet of Matthew, the man who had given up the large income of a tax-gatherer and his rich house in Capernaum to be with Jesus. He washed the feet of James, the fiery brother of John, the swift, sensitive, lovely spirit. Both of them burned for very shame to see their Master on his knees at their feet doing the work of a

[1] See Chapter LI.

slave, or at the best the work that John himself as the youngest present ought to have volunteered to do. Then he turned to Philip of Bethsaida, the attractive, timid spirit whom the strangers, the Greeks, had found it most easy to approach, and his bolder fellow-townsman, Andrew, who was always the first to lead a newcomer to his Master, and so to the others in turn.

As Jesus went from one to the other, the hot impulsive blood of Peter throbbed in his temples. His Master, whom he himself had hailed as the Christ, was stooping down and washing and drying their feet. Jesus came and knelt before Peter. He could not endure it.

'Master,' he cried, 'are you to wash my feet?'

'You do not understand at present what I am doing,' Jesus answered, 'but later on you will understand it.'

'Never!' Peter blurted out. 'You shall never wash my feet.'

Jesus looked straight into the eyes of his wayward, vehement, loyal follower.

'Unless I wash you,' he said to Simon Peter, 'you do not share my lot.'

In swift reaction the impetuous spirit leapt to the thought of sharing all with his Lord.

'Master,' he cried, 'then wash not only feet, but my hands and my head.'

'Any one who has just bathed,' Jesus replied again, 'only needs to have his feet washed; he is clean all over. And you are clean.'

Then, with a sudden revulsion as the thought of Judas' foul treachery swept through him, Jesus added: 'But not all of you.'

After he had finished washing the feet of the Twelve, Jesus unknotted the towel, put aside the basin, took up his robe and threw it over his shoulders, went to his place at the table, and there reclined again on his couch.

The food was placed on the table—the lamb and the un-

leavened loaves to recall how the Hebrews had on the night of the flight from Egypt eaten the lamb and the bread that had been so hurriedly made ready; the salad of bitter herbs —coriander and endive, lettuce and horehound, thistle leaves and succory—to recall the harsh savour of Egyptian slavery; the thin brick of crushed fruit and nuts—bringing to mind the work of brickmaking under the lash.

'Do you grasp the meaning of what I have done to you?' he asked. 'You call me "Teacher" and "Master"; and you are right; for that is what I am. If then I, your Teacher and your Master, have washed your feet, it is your duty, too, to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example so that you may do what I have done to you. In very truth, I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is a messenger greater than he who sent him. If you know all this, you are happy if you really do it.

'With eager longing,' Jesus said to them, looking around the table of his disciple-comrades, 'I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I tell you I will never eat the Passover again till the fulfilment of it in the Kingdom of God.'

One handed a cup to him. The Passover cup all through the centuries has stood for the covenant that the Eternal made with Abraham to be the God of his children and his children's children for ever. Jesus gave thanks to God for it, saying, in the ritual words of the Passover Supper, 'Blessed be he who created the fruit of the vine.' Then he turned and said:

'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time I will never drink the produce of the vine till the Kingdom of God has come.'

So they went through the regular order of the Passover, eating the lamb, dipping the bitter herbs in the crushed fruits, and singing to God's praise.[1]

Jesus then took up in his hands one of the flat, circular

[1] See Chapter X.

loaves and, giving thanks to God for the bread, he broke it in pieces with his fingers, as is the custom always at the Passover. To each of his men he handed a morsel, saying as he did so:

'Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.'

The eating of the Passover food was now over. Then Jesus took the cup of red wine mingled with water, and made it the token, no longer of the old covenant between God and Abraham, but of a new Covenant between Jesus and a new people—those who were to go as his disciples in the Kingdom of God, and so, as children of one Father, they were, of whatever race or nation, all comrades in the new community—brothers in a new family.

'This cup,' he said, 'is the new covenant made by my blood, even that which is poured out for you; as often as you drink it, do it in memory of me.'

It was a moment of deep sadness and of immortal promise. It was the very symbol of his dying, but it was the beginning of a new life for the whole world. He began at that hour a brotherhood of all peoples in all ages, whose oneness is that they are his body.

Jesus saw on the table by him the hand that was to clutch thirty pieces of silver as the price of his life.

'Behold,' he said, 'the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table.'

A deep cloud of trouble passed over Jesus' eyes as he said this. His followers looked anxiously at him.

'In very truth, I tell you,' he said, 'that it is one of you who will betray me.'

In dreadful agitation, the disciples looked at one another. Who could it be?

'Is it I, Master?—Or is it I?' they clamoured, in an anguish of self-doubt. Although for very fear and shame his lips and throat were as hot and dry as a kiln, the traitor—if only to avoid suspicion—forced himself to speak.

'Surely it is not I?' came the voice of Judas on Jesus' left.[1]

'Is it not?' replied Jesus quietly aside to Judas in a voice that all did not catch.[2]

As Jesus was saying this to Judas, Peter, who could not endure the suspense, made signs to John, who was leaning on Jesus' right shoulder. John leaned forward, and Peter whispered across the corner of the table: 'Tell us who it is that he means.'

John leaned back on Jesus' breast and whispered to him: 'Master, who is it?'

'It is,' said Jesus quietly, 'the man I am going to give this piece of bread to, when I dip it in the dish.'

Jesus then tore a piece off a loaf, bent it into the shape of a spoon, and dipped it into the dish. He then handed the morsel to Judas on his left hand. Then he spoke quietly and abruptly to him.

'What you must do, do quickly.'

Judas, with his traitorous throat hardly able to gulp down the bread of the covenant of fellowship which his lips had taken from the very hand of his Master, got up from his couch, swiftly strapped on his sandals, seized his cloak, and swinging it round his shoulders made for the door. As he opened it John, his eyes following Judas with horror, saw in the oblong of the open doorway the intense indigo of a star-strewn sky across which the moon sent a pale radiance.

It was night.

The door closed on Judas.

[1] The words used by Judas ask the question 'Is it I?' in the sense of suggesting an impossibility and expecting a negative reply, e.g. 'Can it be that it is I?'

[2] Peter does not report it to Mark.

CHAPTER LX

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

WITH full hearts they sang the song in which came these words that are full of strength for a man facing enemies who will put him to death.

> 'The Eternal is on my side: I will not fear:
> What can man do unto me?
> It is better to trust in the Eternal
> Than to put confidence in man.'[1]

Jesus now turned to his men and spoke to them such words as lived for ever in the sensitive spirit of the youth who leaned on his shoulder. Simple, immortal sentences came from Jesus' lips—words that any boy who had worked in an orchard could understand, but such as the greatest sages can never exhaust.[2]

'I am the true Vine,' he said, 'and my Father is the vine-dresser. He cuts out any branch in me that does not bear fruit,' and we can almost see the eleven glance at the door through which Judas had just disappeared—'and he cleans every branch that bears fruit, so that it may bear better fruit. Because of the word that I have spoken to you, you are already clean. Remain in me, as I remain in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remain on the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in me.

'I am the Vine; you are the branches. He who remains in me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for you can do nothing

[1] Psalm cxviii. A Hallel psalm always sung at the Passover.

[2] In the order in which they seem originally to have stood, which is not quite the same as that in which the Gospel of St. John gives them in its present form. They were written down, it seems probable, by a disciple of John the Apostle. John died in extreme old age at—it is thought—Ephesus. The discourses at the table had passed through John's thought times without number and—even as we read these discourses—it is not always possible to distinguish where the report of Jesus' words ends and John's or the writer's comment begins.

apart from me.' Then, with the recurring thought of Judas, 'If any one does not remain in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. The branches are collected and thrown into the fire and are burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then ask whatever you wish and you shall have it. As you bear good fruit and show yourselves my disciples, my Father is glorified. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you all this so that my own joy may be yours, and that your joy may be full.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

'You are my friends, if you do my commandments. I no longer call you "servants", because a servant does not know what his master is doing. I have given you the name of "friends" because I have passed on to you everything that I learned from my Father. This,' he repeated, 'is my commandment: "Love one another." '

Jesus went on to prepare them for the hard things that they had to face when he was gone.

'When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of Truth—who comes from the Father, he will bear witness to me. And you are witnesses too, because you have been with me from the very first.'

The word that Jesus used here—Paraclete, or the Helper or Comforter—means someone called in to give whatever help may be needed.

'I have told you all this,' he then pursued, 'so that you may not stumble. They will expel you from the company of worshippers; indeed, the time is coming when any one who kills you will think that he is doing God a service. They will do this because they have not learnt to know the Father, nor even me.'

'Now I am going to Him that sent me.'

Seeing the wrinkles on the forehead of Peter and the perplexity and trouble in the faces of all of them at the very thought of his going he said:

'Your heart is full of sorrow at what I have told you. Yet—and it is the truth that I am telling you—it is for your good that I should go away. If I do not go away, the Helper will never come to you; but if I leave you, I will send him to you.

'The time is coming,' he faced them with the hard truth, 'when you are to be scattered to your homes, each of you, leaving me alone.' His eyes swept the circle of anxious faces. Then, after a pause, seeing their crestfallen looks, he sounded a note of triumphant courage in the face of death. 'But I am not really alone, for the Father is with me. I have spoken to you all in this way so that in me you may find peace. In the world you will meet trouble. But'—and in the very face of torture and death Jesus rallied his men to triumph—'Courage!' he cried, 'I have conquered the world!'

'My dear boys,' Jesus went on, 'I am to be with you but a little while longer. I give you a new commandment: "Love one another"; "love one another," he repeated, 'as I have loved you. It is by this that every one will recognize that you are my disciples, by your loving one another.'

While Jesus had been saying those last sentences, Peter's warm heart had been beating with passionate anguish at the awful sentence, 'I am to be with you but a little while longer'.

'Master,' he cried, 'where are you going?'

'I am going,' Jesus answered, 'where you cannot follow me at present. Later on,' he added, seeing the pain in Peter's eyes, 'later on you shall follow me.' The warm-blooded, impetuous, loving spirit could not brook this separation.

'Why, Master, can't I follow you alone?' Peter cried, and then with bursting heart: 'I will lay down my life for you.'

Jesus knew the loyal heart of Peter and his wayward, unstable will.

'Lay down your life for me?' he repeated, looking deep

into Peter's eyes . . . 'In very truth I tell you the cock will not crow till you have disowned me three times.'

Seeing the hurt expression on Peter's face and the bewildered pain in the eyes of all of them Jesus took up again the story of how they would meet again.

'Let not your hearts be troubled,' he said. 'Trust in God—trust in me also. In my Father's house there are many rooms.[1] If it were not so, I would have told you. For I am going to make ready a place for you. And when I go and make a place ready for you, I will come back and take you to be with me, that where I am you may be also. And,' reverting to Peter's question, 'where I am going, you know the way.'

'Master,' objected Thomas from his place across the table, 'we do not know where you are going. How, then, are we to know the way?'

'I am the True and Living Way,' Jesus answered him. 'No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me you would know my Father also. You know him now; indeed you have seen him.'

'Master,' said Philip, the unadventurous, unimaginative, but attractive disciple, 'let us see the Father: that is all we want.'

'Have I been so long among you and yet you, Philip, do not know me? He who has seen me has seen the Father. How can *you* ask me—"Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

'In very truth, I tell you that he who trusts in me will do the things that I do, and greater things than these shall he do. For I am going to the Father, and I will do what you ask in my name, in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Whatever you ask in my name I will do it.

'If you love me,' said Jesus, summing up his last message in simple words of unfathomable depth, like the clear blue

[1] The idea is that of the hostelry with many rooms—as who should say: 'In my Father's caravanserai are many lodgings. I go to get a room ready for you.'

waters of a deep lake, 'you will obey my commandments, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another Helper to be with you for ever—the Spirit of Truth. At that time you will understand that I am in my Father and you are in me, and I am in you. He who has my commandments and obeys them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will show myself clearly to him.'

Then, as he began to rise to end the Supper and to go, Jesus gave them the greeting—the Hebrew greeting of Shalom or 'Peace'.

'Peace I leave with you,' he said; 'my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives its greeting "Peace" (Shalom) do I give you peace. Let not your hearts be troubled or frightened.'

'Rise,' he said to them all. 'Let us be going.'

They stood and, strapping on their sandals, threw their cloaks over their shoulders against the night air. Stepping out on to the open balcony they looked out over the city and the falling hills to the south. The full Passover moon was at its zenith above them, covering the city with a silver haze, and catching with nets of silver her turrets and cupolas. Through the trees on the height of the Mount of Olives the dying camp fires glowed, watched over by the two giant cedars on the ridge, stark and black in the moonlight. A jackal howled with demoniac laughter, like a doomed soul. So Jesus stood there looking over the city that he longed to gather to himself, towards the Temple of God, whose rulers were at that very hour with Judas plotting his death.

Then he looked round at the Eleven who stood by him there, those on whom alone in all the world he had to rely to carry on his work—the loyal and loving, stupid, blundering, and wilful Eleven. He saw the wolves on their trail as soon as he should be gone, to worry them with their fangs, to scatter and destroy them. He looked on the brave little band whom he loved more than life. Standing there in the

moonlight, he lifted his arms above their heads and his eyes to heaven, and prayed for them.

'Father,' he cried, 'I have made thy name known to these men whom thou hast given to me from the world. They have held to thy message. They know now that whatever thou hast given to me comes from thee. For the truths that thou didst give to me I have given to them and they have received them. They are now sure that I came from thee, and believe that thou didst send me.

'I pray for them. Not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me do I pray. For they are thine. I am crowned with glory in them. I come to thee.'

Then his voice rose to a passion of desire as he cried the deepest wish of his heart.

'Holy Father, keep them by the power of thy name which thou hast given me, so that they may be one as we are one.'

His vision flew beyond that little group of heroes—to those whom they would bring to believe in him from all the world. So he, lifting his voice to God, said:

'Nor do I pray for them alone, but for all who believe in me through their message. May they all be one! As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, so may they be in us—so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'

A few more sentences and Jesus' prayer for his men was ended. He and the Eleven went down the stone steps into the courtyard of the house, and, opening the gate, went out under the porch into the silent, moonlit street. Passing through the city gate they went quickly together down the stone-stepped street into the Ravine and across it to the foot of the Mount of Olives. Behind them noiselessly, like a shadow in the moonlight, glided John Mark, pulling around him his sheet—a youth drawn irresistibly by one whom he had seen and heard with his face lifted to the skies speaking such words as never man spake.

CHAPTER LXI

THE POWER OF DARKNESS

JUDAS, when he left the upper room and shut the door for ever on his comrades, hurried through the night towards Caiaphas' palace. The Passover moon, high in the sky, cut with cold, clear light into the narrow streets, down which he walked.

Wrapped in his cloak against the cold breeze, Judas moved swiftly. Much had to be done. The Passover Supper always ended at midnight, for at that hour the destroying angel went through Egypt and 'passed over' the homes of the Hebrews on whose door-posts the blood of the lamb had been sprinkled. Between midnight and dawn Jesus must be found, arrested, and tried. For he must be beyond the reach of the multitude before the crowds were about to-morrow.

Turmoil raged within Judas. This Leader, for whom he had given up everything, was not, after all, going to bring in a new Kingdom for the Jews. A fury of foiled ambition raged in Judas. The whole movement was a fiasco. Jesus was the dupe of his own fanaticism. Against these billows of anger in his heart there beat the contrary waves of discipleship and hero-worship; of loyalty to the men he had just left in the upper room and to their Leader with whom he had walked over the hills in the wind, the sun, and the rain these many months. How could he betray him? Yet a sullen wave of contempt swept through him for this gang of uncouth Galileans from the barbaric north. They grated on his finer Judaean nerves. So Judas tossed to and fro on a stormy cross-sea of conflicting loves and hates. But the die was cast. Spurred by disappointed ambition and revenge, by hurt pride and avarice, he was going to betray Jesus.

They must arrest him that night!

Judas was going to betray to Caiaphas the night-retreat of Jesus in the shelter of the Mount of Olives. He had already told Caiaphas the one thing on which it was possible to bring a death-charge against Jesus—that Jesus had, in private talk with his disciples, spoken of himself as the Messiah, the Anointed One of God, the Prince of the Kingdom of God. To the Jew this was blasphemy. To the Roman—if put into practice—it could be twisted into treason. On each of these counts a death sentence was legal. But no death sentence could be given in the land except by Pilate, Caesar's Procurator.

Judas was now on the hill below the south wall of the Temple. A great building loomed above him. He knocked. Late as it was the heavy doors of Caiaphas' palace swung open. For Judas was expected. He gave his directions to those in charge.

A posse of Temple police were called out. Armed with clubs, they carried ropes for binding a prisoner. To make an arrest outside the Temple area, however, Roman soldiers were necessary. Caiaphas sent his officers to the Antonia Tower to the garrison. A company of soldiers was ordered out. Lanterns and torches dipped in resin were lighted. The way, though clear enough on the moonlit hill-side, was dark under the olives in the valley.

'This way,' said Judas.

'But I shall not know him when I see him,' said the captain of the police. 'How am I to distinguish him from his disciples?'

'The one whom I kiss,' said Judas, 'that is the man. Seize him and get him safely away.'

From Caiaphas' official residence on the higher slope of the hill Ophel they plunged rapidly down the Roman road[1] into the Ravine of the Winter Torrent, the Kidron. Then they swung sharply to the left and soon crossed the stony bed of the brook by a bridge under the shadow of Absalom's

[1] See photograph (Pl. XXX).

Tomb.[1] The clank of sword and shield and of iron-tipped sandal punctuated the silence as they moved on. So they began to go up from the brook on to the lower slope of the Mount of Olives. Soon they were in the shadow of ancient olive trees. The slinking figure of Judas beckoned them into the Garden of the Oil-Press—Gethsemane.

Suddenly, out of the shadow, there stepped into the moonlight a Man.

Jesus, having come out of the city with the Eleven down the hill from the Last Supper, reached the foot of the Mount of Olives. He turned to his men, and made a sweeping statement that shocked and hurt them.

'You will all be tripped up and fall away[2] from me tonight,' he declared. 'As the Scripture says:

> 'I will strike down the shepherd,
> And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

'But,' he continued, 'after my rising, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.'

Swift as a spark from a struck flint, Peter flashed back:

'Every one may fall away from you, but not I.'

'Simon, Simon,' said Jesus, 'behold Satan has secured for himself the right to put you through his sieve like wheat. But I have prayed that your faith may not fail. And when you come through you must put strength into your brothers. Truly, I tell you, this very night before the cock crows twice you will deny me thrice.'

Peter burst out passionately again and again.

'No! No! Though I have to die with you, never, never will I deny you.'

The others pressed round Jesus and declared the same.

[1] See photograph (Pl. XXIV).

[2] The word used is a passive form of *skandalizo*, a Biblical word adapted into Greek from the Hebrew, meaning 'to put a stumbling-block in the way of', 'to cause to stumble'.

Jesus was very glad to feel the warmth of their love and their hero-worship. But he knew better than they the grievous stress that would within an hour strain their every fibre of courage—as it indeed was at that very hour taxing his own endurance.

'When I sent you out with neither money-bag nor wallet nor sandals, did you lack anything?' he asked.

'No,' they said, 'we wanted for nothing.'

'But now,' he said, 'he who has a purse must take it, and the same with a wallet; and he who has no sword must sell his coat to buy one. For I say to you that this word of Scripture is to be carried out in me: "He was classed with criminals." '

That Jesus in that hour quoted those words from the great vision of the prophet who was stoned to death in that very ravine opens a window through which we can see deep into his soul. For he recalled the thrilling words that led up to them—Isaiah's tragic and immortal vision of the Suffering Servant who saves men by his wounds:

'So shall he sprinkle many nations,[1]
The kings shall keep their silence before him;
And that which they had not heard shall they consider.
For that which had not been told them shall they see.
He is despised and rejected of men;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And we hid as it were our faces from him.
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.
He was wounded for our transgressions;

[1] Isaiah xi–lxvi. This superb mountain peak in the world's literature reveals the nation of Israel as the chosen servant of God to suffer and be persecuted so that the whole world should know the truth of God and see Him and His power—'All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God'. (Isaiah lii. 10.)

He was bruised for our iniquities.
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.

He poured out his soul unto death,
And he was numbered with the transgressors.[1]

Jesus quoted those words as being true of himself. He showed, as he did when he sent out the Twelve in Galilee two by two[2] that his supreme goal was that the Jewish people should turn in their tracks—repent as we say—and go to the world as a nation with the Good News of the Love of God for all men.

It was a new and shocking thing to the disciples that they should be classed as the followers—not of the King of the new Kingdom—but of 'a criminal'.

They caught, however, at his word about the need of a sword.

'Master,' they said, 'here are two swords.'

'Enough; enough,' he said.

They came now to Jesus' favourite place of retreat on the side of the Mount, a garden called Gethsemane. It was surrounded by a little wall of stones. In it among the boulders olive trees grew, and there was an old oil-press in which to crush the ripe olives.

'Sit here,' he said to his disciples, 'while I go and pray.'

He hungered, however, for the fellowship of his men; and he took with him the three who had again and again gone away with him in times of crisis—Peter, James, and John. The will that had steeled him to set his face towards Jerusalem and to cross the hills and valleys to reach the city; the will that had kept him while he grappled with the merchant and money-changer, and even with the Sanhedrin in the Temple, was now wrenched with an intolerable strain. The

[1] Or 'was classed with the criminals'. The Hebrew word (and we can tell from the words that Luke uses that Jesus quoted direct from the Hebrew) meant 'a heinous law-breaker'.

[2] See Chapter XXXVI.

death that he had foreseen months before and towards which he had walked without flinching day after day was now looming over him. The refusal of the leaders of his nation to see the True Way of God and take it; their leadership of the blinded people into the last pit of destruction weighed down his soul in agony. The great tragedy of Man's life: his rejection of the love of God, shutting his eyes to the light of the Father and refusing obedience to His will which Jesus had come to reveal; this was breaking the heart of Jesus; and was even now about to crucify him. He was in dire distress, torn with grief. He gasped to his three intimate comrades such words as had never been wrung from him.

'My heart is in anguish,' he whispered; 'sad to death. Stay here and watch.'

He set them to keep watch so that he might have warning of the coming of his enemies. He went a stone's throw from them. There, quivering with suffering as the whole terror of the Power of Darkness burst upon him, he threw himself on the ground upon his face. Again and again words were wrung from his lips praying that, if it could be, he should be spared the drinking of this most bitter cup. As a wounded soldier on the battlefield will cry out like a child for his mother, so the baby word that Jesus had used as a child broke from him—

'Abba [1]—Father—thou canst do everything. Take this cup away from me . . . Yet not my will . . . but thy will . . . be done.'

Peter and John and James were young and tired. They sat on the ground, resting against the tree-trunks and boulders. Their Master was in agony. But their heads nodded with fatigue. While sweat was wrung in gouts from his brow by the terrible suffering of that hour, the men who a few moments before had sworn that if it meant death they would stand by him slept. As those three had slept when he was

[1] 'Abba' here has all the simplicity and longing for help and love of a child calling out in the dark 'Daddy'.

transfigured on the other Mount, so now they slept when he wrestled in the garden on the Mount of Olives. No one save the youth—John Mark—hidden among the trees saw and heard, and later told to the listening world in his Gospel, the story of that dread hour when, in the shade of those olives, the fearful struggle of the Power of Darkness with the Power of Light came to its crisis and climax; and the universe held its breath as the fate of the world swung in the balance on a Man's will.

Jesus raised himself from his knees and turned to seek human comradeship. His friends lay there fast asleep. Bending over Peter, he woke him.

'Simon,' he said, with the pain of his loneliness in his voice, 'are you sleeping? Could you not keep sentry for a single hour?'

Then, as the two brothers also rubbed their eyes and sat up, he said to the three of them:

'Watch and pray that you may not slip into temptation. The spirit is willing,' he added, summing up their tragic failure and his own anguish that night, 'but the flesh is weak.'

Again he went a stone's throw away from them and again cried aloud:

'O my Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it . . . thy will be done.'

Again Jesus went back to the place where he had left his newly-awakened disciples, and had told them to watch. Again he found them fast asleep. They awoke at his touch, utterly confused and sheepishly ashamed. 'Our eyes were very heavy,' Peter told Mark years later, shamefacedly, in relating the story; 'we did not know what to answer him.'

Jesus went away again alone. A third time he prostrated himself and cried out to his Father that he would accept his will. Then he saw and heard that to which his faithless men, asleep at their watch, were blind and deaf. He caught sight of the rise and fall of torches and lanterns, and heard the clank of scabbards on the boulders.

Looking through the trees he saw a motley mob coming along the ravine and climbing towards the garden. He went back to his three men.

'Asleep still! Still taking your ease!' he cried. 'Enough of this! The hour has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of wicked men. Wake up! Let us go! Look, here is my betrayer close at hand.'

Peter and John and James were well awake now. For even while Jesus was saying this the mob with swords and clubs in their hands came surging along, Judas among them. As they approached, Peter gripped the hilt of his sword. Suddenly as the crowd drew near, out of the shadow, there stepped into the moonlight, Jesus.

The crowd of soldiery and officers stopped dead. A sudden silence fell. Some had never seen him. Others had seen him and knew of the wonder of his deeds and the greatness of his words. Now they were all face to face with him. There, in the silence of the dead of night, they held their breath as he stood there unarmed before their force, the glory of God shining in his face as he came triumphant from the agony of that last dread wrestling.

'Whom are you seeking?' he asked.

'Jesus the Nazarene,' they answered.

'I am he.'

With those words Jesus moved towards them. The soldiers and the servants, filled with awe at the power that came from him, the burning majesty of a King moving to triumph through the strange gates of death, fell back before him as in the very presence of God and threw themselves to the ground.

Judas, strung up to breaking-point by the tense situation, afraid lest after all the arrest should not take place, stepped out.

'Master,' he cried, moving swiftly forward; and he kissed Jesus, kissed him tenderly.

'Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' exclaimed Jesus, and then using a word that stands for an intimate friend, a word that must have cut Judas to the quick: 'Comrade, go on with that for which you have come.'

'Whom are you seeking?' Jesus again asked the soldiers.

'Jesus the Nazarene,' they answered dully.

'I told you that I am he,' Jesus went on. 'If you are looking for me, let these men escape'—pointing to his disciples, for whose safety he thought even in this hour of crisis and peril.

'Shall we strike with our swords?' exclaimed the two disciples who carried weapons.

The high-priest's servant, Malchus, stepped forward to make the arrest. Peter, aflame, leapt at him, his uplifted sword in his powerful hand, and brought it down with a lightning stroke that missed Malchus' head, but sliced off his right ear.

'Sheathe your sword,' said Jesus sharply to his impetuous friend. 'All that take the sword will perish with the sword. What! Do you not think that I can even now call to my Father to provide more than twelve legions of angels. Am I not to drink the cup which the Father has handed to me?'

'Let me at least do this,' Jesus said to Malchus, and, lifting his hand, he touched the bleeding ear, and staunched the blood of the man whose hand was stretched out to arrest him.

Then he turned again to the crowd standing there in a confused mass—the officers, the police with their clubs—the torches and lanterns throwing weird shadows among the trees and glinting on the breastplates, helmets, and sword-hilts of the soldiers.

'Have you sallied out to arrest me like a robber?' he asked; 'you with your swords and your bludgeons. I was there close at hand in the Temple, day after day, and you never moved a finger to take me . . . But this is your hour. The Power of Darkness has its way.'

Their reply was to close in on him. The captain bound Jesus' wrists together with a rope. All the disciples abandoned

him. They fled among the trees and up the hill-sides, and were lost in the darkness. All deserted him. Two, however, Peter and John, hidden among the olives, watched the strange scene.

Then John Mark, who all unseen had followed down the hill behind them and alone watched Jesus in his agony, moved forward impulsively to the side of the Man who was henceforward to be the Lord of his life. The soldiers grabbed the boy. Sudden panic swept over him. He struggled, loosed himself from the linen sheet that he had thrown round him when he rose from bed, and was off like a deer through the trees—naked, leaving the empty linen sheet in the hands of the foiled soldiers.

CHAPTER LXII

SIFTED AS WHEAT

THE posse of police led Jesus back along the track by the Ravine and some distance up the hill-side. Two other men came stealthily at the end of the tragic procession—John and Peter. One man crept away up tortuous paths that fitted his twisted soul. In his girdle he had knotted his wage for that night's work—thirty pieces of silver. Remorse was already gnawing within Judas.

Bearing to the right, the soldiers and officers led their prisoner to the front of a splendid house, the palace of Annas, the aged father of Caiaphas' wife. The gates were swung open by the young woman who was responsible for letting people in and out. The Sanhedrin police led Jesus in. The priests and officers came through with them into the court-yard. The Roman soldiery, however, now that their arrest was made, did not enter. Their work was done: so they marched on to their place in Pilate's garrison at Antony's tower and were dismissed. John slipped quietly into Annas' palace with the crowd. He was known in the household and was recognized by the portress and admitted.

Other messengers had hurried on to Caiaphas' palace to advise him of the arrest, so that he could at once call the Sanhedrin together. Annas had been told that the arrest was imminent, and was waiting to try to extort from Jesus some admission that would justify a death sentence by Jewish or Roman law or both. Jesus was led across the square court-yard of Annas' palace and through an archway up steps into an inner hall.

There Jesus looked into the cold, calculating, cruel eyes of the most cunning, subtle, and deadly mind in the land. This enormously wealthy old man, no longer high-priest, had what pleased him better than office—great power behind

the scenes. Annas and his sons had set up the Temple booths that Jesus had denounced. He and his sons corrupted judges by bribery. His money also was found only too useful by spendthrift Roman officers who were glad to borrow from him and, being unable to pay him back, were held in his grip by secret tentacles. His was the hidden hand that ruled even Roman power in Jerusalem.

The arrest of Jesus was legal. The Roman Emperor had left to the seventy-one of the General Council of the Sanhedrin—and even to its inner ring of twenty-three—the right to rule over the Jews in all matters of their religion and its practices. The Emperor reserved, however, to the Roman Procurator alone the right to sentence to death. So Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin had the right under Roman law to arrest Jesus, but they could not condemn him. The passing of blood-money from the Temple treasury to bribe a follower of Jesus to betray him was, on the contrary, not only a low and contemptible deed, but on any strict path of justice indefensible, let alone in a body like the Sanhedrin, whose sole right to exist was to uphold the Law of a God of Justice and of Mercy.

The first problem before Annas and Caiaphas that night, face to face with Jesus, was that they had no count on which to try the accused. They must within two or three hours find a charge on which they could drive Pilate, willy-nilly, as Roman Procurator, not only to pass sentence of death, but actually to execute Jesus that very morning before the crowds of Passover pilgrims were about. This fearful pressure of time showed itself in their frantic, absolutely illegal, act of trying him in the night and on the eve of the Feast. The Jewish law required that 'capital trials are to begin only in the daytime and must also be ended during the day . . And they must be postponed until a second day if there is to be a condemnation'.

It was, then, a doubly flagrant and disgraceful breach of the Law by the chief officer of the Law when Caiaphas forced

the trial through in a few hours of one night and the early morning. It was pitiless murder behind a cracked façade of justice.

Annas, then, while the members of the Sanhedrin were being hurriedly roused from their sleep and hustled to Caiaphas' palace, started cross-questioning Jesus. He had no legal standing. It was an impertinent attempt to get from Jesus some words that could be used against him in the trial. When this atrocious mental torture by Annas had gone on for an hour, Jesus objected, as he had every legal and moral right to do.

'Why do you question me?' he asked Annas. 'I have talked openly before all the world. I have continually given my teaching in this or that synagogue or in the Temple, where the Jews habitually come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why question me? Question those who heard the things that I said to them. These witnesses here,' he concluded, pointing to the men who stood round him and by Annas, 'they know what I said.'

From the point of view of every principle and practice of Jewish law Jesus was right and Annas wrong. One of the police, furious at Jesus' courage, struck him with the open hand, shouting angrily:

'Is that the way you answer the high-priest?'

'If I have said anything wrong,' Jesus turned on him, 'prove it; but if I have said what is true, why that blow?'

Annas gave it up. Jesus was bound again with cords and led out through the courtyard up the Roman stepped street of the hill Ophel. Near the top on the left stood the other priestly palace, that of Caiaphas. Again the door was swung open and the police with Jesus and the group of priests and Temple officers who were in charge passed in.

John and Peter still followed. John went into the palace with the crowd, for he was known to the household. He with his father Zebedee was in the export fish-trade, and was accustomed to pay his Temple dues in Jerusalem to the

'Jesus was led up the stepped Roman street of the hill Ophel.'

Looking east from the hill Ophel (on which Caiaphas' Palace was built) below the south wall of the Temple, down the Roman stepped street which climbs from the lower end of the Kidron Ravine. The village of Siloam faces us. The Mount of Olives runs up to the left.

high-priest.[1] The portress admitted him. Peter she did not know. He stamped up and down outside, the cold night wind whipping about his legs, his heart full of anguish for his Master.

Caiaphas' palace stood on the steep hill-side to the south of the Temple facing eastward over the Kidron towards the Mount of Olives. The covered porch and gateway led into a walled courtyard open to the sky. On one side stood a row of stone measures with which the receivers of the tithes and of the fines inflicted by the court for breaches of the Law measured the grain or oil brought as payment. On the lintel above these was carved in Hebrew 'It is the place of Korban for the paying of fines'.[2] Steps led down into subterranean windowless dungeons hewn out of the solid rock. In these caverns prisoners were locked and chained awaiting trial. In the pillars, cut from the rock, were (and are) holes through which the chains and cords of the prisoners were tied.

Broad steps led up from the marble courtyard into which Jesus was led to the Hall of Audience. The courtyard was lower than this hall, for Caiaphas' palace was built on the steeply sloping side of the hill. Jesus now was led up the marble steps into this higher hall. There the emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin was now assembling. He stood,

[1] An explanation of John's acquaintance with the high-priest's household, which comes down from early times, was given by Nonnus, an Egyptian scholar, who, after being converted to Christianity, wrote a poetic version of St. John's Gospel, in which he puts a number of things that he learned by independent research. This is what Nonnus wrote (about A.D. 400): 'Simon followed in his path at a distance, and another young companion who, being well known to the famous high-priest through his trade as a fisherman, went after Christ into the courtyard.'

[2] The weights and measures, the Hin, the Bath or Ephah, the Gomor, &c., and the lintel of the door, with the word 'Korban' on it, are now in a museum in Jerusalem. These have recently been found on the spot alongside a stone mill that was worked by a donkey whose little feet going round and round the mill wore a groove in the very rock. The reasons that have, in the last few years, convinced many that this—and not the traditional site—is the place of Caiaphas' palace are now published in *Le Véritable Emplacement du Palais de Caïaphe*, par R. P. Xavier Marchet. (Lecoffre, 90 rue Bonaparte, Paris, 1927.)

his hands bound, in front of Caiaphas in his marble chair of office. Looking over his shoulder down the steps through the archway to the lower courtyard, Jesus could see John with the crowd of Caiaphas' underlings. The cold night wind cut in, and the police and servants were shivering. The servants made a glowing charcoal fire in a brazier. They and the police stood around it under the starry sky, talking of the events of the night.

John felt that he must have his friend Peter by his side. So he hurried out to the girl at the door and asked her if she would let his comrade in who was standing outside. She agreed, threw open the door, and called Peter in.

'Are you also one of this man's disciples?' she asked Peter.

'No,' he lied swiftly, 'I am not.' It was a sudden impulse. What good could he do to Jesus if he said, 'Yes'? Besides, he might be called as a witness and might thus harm Jesus' cause.

Glad to escape from the outer cold and to warm himself, Peter sat down in the group around the fire and joined in the talk. The slave-woman at the gate, with a puzzled expression, was studying Peter's face as the glow of the charcoal fire in the brazier shone warmly on his bronzed features. After a long look at him, she, pointing to Peter, cried to the others, 'That fellow was with him too.'

'Woman,' retorted Peter crossly, 'I know nothing about him.'

Peter, frightened, made for the shelter of the cloister near the gate of the palace. Slowly the minutes went by. Jesus had now been a full hour with Caiaphas. Peter, never able to keep silent, got into conversation with some of the high-priest's servants. He talked with his rough, guttural Galilean burr. A relative of Malchus, the high-priest's servant, whose ear Peter had sliced off with his all-too-ready sword, came menacingly up to him. Now was his chance to wipe off the score against Peter.

'That fellow was with him,' he cried. 'He is a Galilean. His speech betrays it. Did I not see you in the garden with

him?' he demanded, turning to Peter. Peter leapt to his feet with an oath. His face flushed with anger and with fear.

'I don't know this man that you are talking about,' he blustered.

Then, as he saw their unbelieving faces:

'May I be cursed if I know the man,' he cried with oaths. Then he stopped. Clear across the courtyard from the outer world came the crowing of a cock. The sound stabbed his memory. Jesus' words came back: 'Satan has claimed the right to sift you as wheat. Before the cock crows you will have denied me thrice.'

He looked up. At the top of the steps in Caiaphas' court Peter saw the face that he knew and loved best in the world—Jesus' face—surrounded by cold, cruel men hunting him to death. Jesus' ears had caught the sound of curses and the denial. He turned. His eyes looked deep into those of Peter, who dashed for the gate, swung it open, and hurrying out of the moonlight buried himself in the darkness, his heart bursting, his powerful body shaken. He wept bitterly, the sobs of a strong man who has betrayed the beloved Lord of his life in the hour of tragic trial—and will never see him again.

CHAPTER LXIII

THE TRIAL OF THE KING

THE cock had crowed. The first flush of dawn tinged the grey sky.

An usher thumped thrice on the marble floor of Caiaphas' Council Room with his stave. The trial was to begin.

Jesus stood there, his hands bound, listening, but silent. In front of him, seated in his marble chair of office, sat Caiaphas. In a semicircle on either side of Caiaphas sat the seventy of the Sanhedrin, men full of the dignity of office, robed splendidly, and stroking their soft, smooth beards with softer, smoother hands. Most of them were eager for Jesus' death. Some were with him in their hearts. Nicodemus sat there torn between conscience and career. To stand by Jesus would have ended his career, would have brought down on him the scorn and wrath of Caiaphas and of his colleagues. So he was silent, as was another member of the Sanhedrin who in his heart believed in Jesus—a rich man, Joseph of Arimathaea.

Witnesses were called to give evidence. The voice of the officer of the court rang out, reading the warning with which all trials were bound to begin:

'Forget not, O witness, that . . . in this trial for life, if thou sinnest, the blood of the accused and the blood of his seed to the end of time shall be imputed unto you . . . Therefore was Adam created one man and alone, to teach you that if any witness destroy one soul out of Israel, he is held by the Scripture to be as if he had destroyed the world; and he who saves one such soul as if he had saved the world.'

It was the most solemn charge that a witness could hear. So one after another, witnesses were called. They made first this charge and then that. But their charges against Jesus never agreed one with another. At last two witnesses were found who agreed in saying almost the same thing. They

had been listening to Jesus talking in the Temple. One declared that he had overheard him say:

'I will', and the other 'I am able to', 'destroy this Temple made with hands and in three days build another made without hands.'

Thus their evidence did not exactly agree. Did he say 'will destroy', or 'can destroy'? What did it matter which he said? If he said 'I will destroy', what was that but the wild and whirling word of a fanatic—a crazy threat that no one would take seriously? If he said 'I can destroy', it was simply a grotesque boast that would make men laugh in derision. Caiaphas knew that that was not a charge with which he could go to Pilate to ask him to pass sentence of death. Pilate would laugh him to scorn.

What Jesus really had said, although he did not now stoop to correct their silly charge, was entirely different. He said 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it.'[1] Not only so, but what he said was precisely true. 'Destroy this building, that is the place where men now think of the Creator of the Universe as the God of the Jews, and I will in my own person as his Son rebuild the world-temple of his invisible Kingdom as the Father of all men.' That is not only what he could do; it is what he did, and is doing.

The trial was legally at an end. No witnesses could be found to agree on a real capital charge. Under the wise and just rules of Hebrew law no man was allowed to give evidence against himself. 'Our law,' the Jewish rules ran, 'condemns no one to death upon his own confession'; and again, 'It is a root principle with us that no one can damage himself by what he says in judgement.' There was, therefore, nothing more to do.

Caiaphas' brain, however, behind the mask of his cold face, was searching for some way to get Jesus killed that morning. He had said in a meeting of that very Sanhedrin a few weeks ago, 'It is expedient that one man die and not a

[1] John ii. 19.

whole nation'. His patriotic spirit would save the nation even if he tore in shreds the ancient practice and settled rule of Hebrew law, of which he was the chief officer.

Caiaphas made up his mind. He stood up. Before him was, to his view, a fanatic carpenter turned prophet who was leading the ignorant to upheaval and revolution.

'Do you,' he demanded of Jesus, 'make no answer to what these witnesses bring against you?'

Jesus looked straight into Caiaphas' face—and said nothing. His eyes pierced like a sword through jewelled breastplate and priestly robe, through thin pretence and mocking hypocrisy, to the high-priest's shrivelled soul. Caiaphas in sheer desperation decided to take the plunge and make an end. Judas had told him that in private Jesus, among his disciples, had talked of himself as the Christ. So the high-priest gathered his forces for his crowning wrong. He uttered the most sacred and awful oath that a Jew could speak, that of the name of the Eternal, and by it he charged Jesus to answer the most momentous question that Hebrew lips could frame and give answer as evidence against himself.

'I charge you by the living God that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.'

In spite of themselves even the hardened Sanhedrin held their breath. Then Jesus made the supreme confession and claim; spoke the truth that had burned in his message and that upheld him even at that hour—that he was the Son of God, that he came to bring man back to God and to bring God into the lives of men, that in him all and more than all that Isaiah had dreamed and that the nation had longed for had come true among men.

'I am,' Jesus replied.

A low murmur of tense excitement arose in the court.

Then Jesus added to his avowal the words of the prophet Daniel that Caiaphas knew well—'and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

Caiaphas' heart leapt with joy. He had achieved his scheme. But, masking his delight, he looked horrified. He seized his robe in both his hands and tore a great rent in it. It was the one command of Hebrew law that Caiaphas did carry out that morning—that at hearing blasphemy a Rabbi must rend his clothing in horrified detestation of the crime.

'What further need have we of witnesses?' he demanded, looking round on his colleagues on the Sanhedrin and flinging aside the fact that he was denying the very roots of Hebrew law in condemning a man on his own witness drawn under the most holy of all oaths. 'What other evidence do we need?' he repeated. Jesus had spoken blasphemy. By Jewish law blasphemy must be punished by death.

The chorus of voices rose in shrill eagerness. 'He is worthy of death,' they cried—all of them, we are told, though what were the tortures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea we cannot conceive.

So Caiaphas at last achieved his goal by breaking a way across the ramparts of Hebrew justice and plunging through the jungle of illegality to judicial murder.

Beastliness crowded on the heels of Caiaphas' breach of law. The officers of the court, seeing the helpless and condemned peasant standing there defenceless with his hands bound, crowded round him and vented their cowardly spite on him. One spat in Jesus' face, while a bully gave the shackled prisoner a staggering blow first on this side and then on that. One wound a cloth round Jesus' eyes to blindfold him, while others cuffed him with the flat of their hands, cackling with derisive laughter as they cried:

'Play the prophet to us, you Christ, you! Tell us who struck you!'

No check was put on them by the high-priest. Caiaphas' work had only begun. He could say that Jesus was worthy of death; the Roman procurator alone had the right to pronounce sentence. It was still the early morning of Friday, the day before the full Passover. Jesus must now be led to Pilate, and

swiftly too if they were to get ahead of the pilgrim crowd. So the Sanhedrin broke up. Many of them started off with Caiaphas into the city toward the Praetorium, Pilate's official residence in Jerusalem and his judgement hall.

Jesus was gripped on either side by police officers and led along. They struck northward near the aqueduct in which the waters from Solomon's Pool among the hills ran into the city. Winding through its streets they went up the incline towards the Tower of Antony. A hundred yards, however, before reaching that tower, as they went up the street, its stones grooved with the grinding of chariot wheels, they came to a wide open space all flagged with stones. Groups of Roman soldiers lounged in the morning sunshine. Some, squatting on the pavement, threw dice and played games of chance and of skill on the squares that they had cut with their knives and dagger points in the stone.[1] The place was called the Pavement or, in Hebrew, Gabbatha.

This open piazza lay in front of a noble Roman building—the Praetorium of the Roman Procurator. Sentinels stood on guard at the gateway. A covered, arched gallery or balcony ran along a part of the front. Here the Roman officers or the Procurator, Pontius Pilate himself, could look out and could speak with those on the piazza below.

Caiaphas and the police officers with Jesus, followed by many of the Sanhedrin and some of the city rabble of Jerusalem, who were about even at that early hour, halted at this spot. Caiaphas sent an urgent message in to the Procurator, Pontius Pilate.

'I have a prisoner here condemned on a verdict worthy of death. I cannot come into the Praetorium as it is heathen ground and would so defile me that I could not take the Passover this evening. Will you come out and give judgement and order sentence on this man?'

Pilate, a proud and never a very patient man, was in no good humour at being disturbed so early. However, he called

[1] These can still be seen there.

a slave to throw over his shoulders his toga praetexta, the creamy, full robe with its rich border of Tyrian purple, and took up his ivory baton of office. Under the robe he wore his short linen tunic held by its wide purple belt and on his feet high half-boots were laced. With his interpreter by his side and a secretary with wax tablets and an ivory stylus, he came out on to the low balcony under the arches at the top of the steps leading up from the Pavement into the Praetorium.

Looking down on to the piazza—the Pavement—Pilate saw an agitated crowd whose voices called across the space in excited cackles of demand. In front of them were priests from the Temple and Rabbis of the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas was their leader. In front of Caiaphas, with his hands tied together, stood Jesus. As the Roman ruler strode out of the shadow into the sunshine sudden silence fell. Looking into the faces of the priests, pointing to Jesus with his rod of office, Pilate rapped out an impatient question:

'What accusation have you to bring against this man?'

Caiaphas, who loathed Pilate because he had made great efforts to abolish Jewish laws and had tried to trample on their Temple rights, gave an impertinent retort.

'If the man were not a criminal,' he snapped, 'we would not have handed him over to you.'

'Take him yourselves,' retorted Pilate, who had no wish to repeat the experience of years before when he had brought a hornet's nest about his ears by meddling with Jewish religious matters,[1] and who knew Caiaphas well enough to suspect hidden mischief. Why this haste? And on a Passover morning when by Hebrew law no such business must be done? He must watch his steps carefully.

'Take him yourselves,' said Pilate, 'and sentence him according to your own Law.'

'We have no right to put any one to death,' countered Caiaphas, which Pilate knew to be the law. Caiaphas, like every high-priest in those times, hated this restriction that

[1] See Chapter XIV.

Rome put on his power. Caiaphas as High-Priest was president of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court, responsible in their view only to God. If the Romans had not been there, Caiaphas, having found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, could have sentenced him to be stoned to death. But now he had to come and beg Pilate, the heathen alien as Caiaphas thought him, to order Jesus' execution. That maddened the High-Priest beyond words. For Pilate, the Procurator of the Emperor Tiberius, sat in Jerusalem that day as representative of the head of the mightiest state the world had ever seen. So Pilate's power was above that of Caiaphas. Worse still, from the Jewish point of view, the Emperor claimed to have divine power, to be Pontifex Maximus, which was blasphemy.

'We found this fellow,' Caiaphas went on, lying glibly and playing on Pilate's fear of rebellion against Rome, 'perverting our nation, forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming that he is an anointed King—the Messiah.'

Beckoning to Jesus to follow him, Pilate turned his back on Caiaphas and the mob with him and went into the Praetorium. Jesus walked up the steps into the Roman judgement hall. Pilate took his place in the lordly-cushioned seat of marble and ivory inset with precious stones—his chair of justice. Pilate had the power to carry out Caiaphas' judgement. He had also the power to ask Jesus what was his defence, to review the whole case, to refuse to carry out the sentence, and to set the prisoner free. That is to say, the mighty engine of Roman justice and its care for order and for the liberty of the free subjects of the Empire was in Pilate's hands. His principal responsibility, as Pilate himself saw it, was to keep order and peace in Palestine.

Pilate saw, on the one hand, an accusing mob behind a crafty high-priest. On the other hand, he saw a simple citizen, alone, with no friend by his side, no lawyer to defend his case, his face scarred with the brutal blows of Caiaphas' rough servants. Pilate's sympathy was with Jesus. His sense

of his duty as a judge was with the man who had no one to stand by him. So Jesus stood before the Procurator in the Roman Palace of Justice and Pilate began to put questions to him.

What did Pilate want to find out? Three charges had just been made by Caiaphas to Pilate against Jesus. First, that he perverted the Jewish people. Well, let the Jews look to it: it was a question of their religion. Secondly, forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar—that, a moment's questioning of a witness to what Jesus had said earlier that week in the Temple proved to be absolutely the opposite of what Jesus had taught —a flagrant and impudent lie. Pilate brushed it aside. He went straight to the charge that really was important to the Roman Empire, and most of all to Pilate as responsible for peace and order in Palestine, that Jesus claimed to be the anointed King—the Messiah.

'Then you are King of the Jews?' Pilate put it to Jesus, setting aside at once heavy formalism and going straight to the issue. The response startled him; it was not a reply, but a question that drove Pilate's mind swiftly back to question the very sources of his information.

'Are you saying that of your own accord?' asked Jesus, 'or did others tell you that about me?'

'Am I a Jew?' protested Pilate, rejecting by the scornful ejaculation the idea of having developed the idea himself. 'Your own nation and the high-priests have handed you over to me.' Then, getting back to the essential question, he asked Jesus:

'What have you done?'

Jesus, who had refused to answer the hypocritical pryings of Annas, replied in simple, direct words to the honest question that Pilate asked. He went straight to the issue that was all-important for Pilate—this question of Jesus and his Kingship. Was it against Rome; if not, what was it?

'My Kingdom,' Jesus said, 'does not belong to this world. If my Kingdom did belong to this world my men would have

fought vehemently[1] to stop me from being handed over to the authorities. No,' he went on, 'my Kingdom lies elsewhere.'

Pilate's spirit was captivated. He was an educated Roman from the court of Tiberius in a day when belief in the old gods and goddesses—Zeus, Athene or Apollo—and faith in the divine voice of God speaking through oracles were, for men of culture, dead. And even that divinity which hedged the Emperor was, for Pilate, not real but only an instrument of Roman patriotism—a bond of Empire to keep the simple people in awe. Looking into the face of Jesus, Pilate saw there a spirit that glowed with a fire from some hidden and divine altar, a life that breathed a pure and heavenly atmosphere, a man who radiated strength and majesty, not through rank or raiment or chair of high office, but from secret and inexhaustible reservoirs of power. For an instant the longing for some share of that higher life touched stubborn, self-willed, ambitious Pilate. He encouraged Jesus to go on.

'So you are a king—*you*!' said Pilate.

'What you say is true; I am a King,' Jesus answered. 'That is why I was born. This is why I came into the world—to witness for the truth. Every one,' he went on, looking Pilate straight in the eyes, 'every one who is on the side of truth listens to my voice.'

'Truth!' echoed Pilate, for the word set ringing in his memory bells of half-forgotten idealism and discarded out-of-date beliefs—'Ah, what is truth?'

Pilate the man, the philosopher, would gladly have gone on discussing with Jesus in that search for truth. But the judge, the colonial administrator, must act and that swiftly. It was as clear as crystal to Pilate's Roman mind; this simple, mystical teacher from Galilee with his Invisible Kingdom whose citizens were those who heard the truth and followed it—he was no dangerous revolutionary, no rebel against Rome. An attractive idealist, with a compelling power in his clear,

[1] The word *agonizomai* bears the sense of tense wrestling that strains every nerve and muscle to win.

piercing, but kindly eyes; a strange sense of real kingship in the simple, natural dignity of his bearing and in the authority of his words—yes! But a dangerous revolutionary? —Ridiculous!

Leaving Jesus in the judgement-hall, Pilate went out on to the loggia. There, standing behind its balustrade, he looked down on the crowd on the Pavement with the priests and their attendants in front. He there pronounced his judgement.

'I find no crime in him,' said Pilate.

A roar of baffled rage rose from the priests and their attendants and the crowd of cringing Jerusalem citizens —hangers-on and dependants of the Temple.

Jesus was innocent. The trial was over. The prisoner, being acquitted by the supreme court, was, by right of all true justice, free. If Pilate had been a strong man he would simply have let his judgement stand. Caiaphas, however, with that grim, cold determination of his, though for the moment baffled, was still undaunted. He knew Pilate, better than Pilate knew himself. So Caiaphas set the mob shouting.

'He stirs up the people,' they bellowed, 'teaching all through Judaea. He started from Galilee; now he is here.'

Pilate's ear, seeking for some way out of this troublesome imbroglio, caught the word 'Galilee'.

'Is this man a Galilean?' he asked.

'Yes,' came back from the priests.

'Then he belongs to Herod's territory,' said Pilate with a sigh of relief, 'He is under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas.'

Pilate detested Herod, and Herod returned the hate with interest. Pilate had done a dreadful deed a year or so before when he killed Galileans in the Temple, mingling their blood with that of the sacrifice. Herod Antipas loathed him for that, and indeed for lording it over him as his superior. Pilate was, however, feeling none too sure of his standing with the Emperor. The Jews were beginning to complain about him to Rome.

So it suited Pilate from every point of view to slide out of the responsibility of this case and slip it on to Herod Antipas' shoulders. Pilate gave an order to an officer.

'Lead this prisoner over to the court of King Herod.'

Jesus was again dragged out into the street. The chief priests and riff-raff tailed after them, following Jesus and his escort towards Herod's palace. Caiaphas meant to leave no stone unturned to have Jesus slain. Down and up the tortuous ways they went till they came to the citadel that Herod's father, Herod the Great, had built. Word was sent in to the Idumaean despot. He was filled with joy. At last, here was this man, this prophet of whom he had heard such astounding things. Some said he was actually John the Baptist, whom Herod, trapped by his fascinating subtle wife, had beheaded in obedience to a fantastic vow. How Herod had longed to see Jesus! He hoped that Jesus might give him the excitement of witnessing a miracle. Herod was grateful to Pilate for this chance. The two enemies were reconciled from that day.

Going in under the arch of Herod's courtyard, Jesus was led to the marble hall where the Tetrarch, forewarned by messengers, sat waiting. Jesus entered. Here, Herod saw, was no John, no shaggy rebel dressed in rough camel-hair. As Jesus stood there Herod plied him with question after question. Jesus did not answer. The only replies that he had given that morning were to the straight question put to him first by Caiaphas and then by Pilate—'Was he the Messiah—the anointed of God?' Neither Annas, with his cynical probings, nor Herod, with his diseased passion for something sensational, could get Jesus to open his lips. Meanwhile the high-priests and the scribes stood without and shouted accusations of every sort. Herod saw that here was no subject for judicial death. So he and his soldiers started to make a farce of the whole proceeding. Slaves brought from a chest one of Herod's old robes. They dressed Jesus up as a mock king. Draped for the ridicule of the mob, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate

uncondemned. Yet on Jesus' shoulders even the mock costume was kingly.

While Pilate was sitting there on his marble judgement seat and Jesus was being at last led up the steps back to him, a flutter of robes was heard. Pilate's wife had sent a messenger to him in hot haste. It was still only between seven and eight o'clock in the morning. She had been wakened from a fearful dream. Calling her maidens, and hearing what was afoot in the Praetorium, she wrote swiftly on a wax tablet and sent a messenger with it to her husband.

'Do nothing with that innocent man. For I have suffered greatly this morning in a dream about him.'

Pilate's nerve was beginning to be shaken. Again he went on to the balcony.

'You brought this man before me as an inciter to rebellion among the people. I have examined him before you. I have found nothing criminal about him, in spite of all your accusations against him. No, nor has Herod, for he has sent him back to us. He has done nothing, you see, that is worthy of death.' Then, with a weak surrender to their lust for blood that showed the fatal weakness that was to be, at length, Pilate's undoing—'I shall free him with a scourging.'

A bellow of wrath went up, like the roar of a hungry beast baulked of its prey. Caiaphas sent his priests among the crowd, egging them on to shout for Jesus to be crucified.

'To the cross! To the cross!' yelled the mob.

Again Pilate tried to pacify them. Holding up his hand for silence, he called out:

'You have a custom that I should release to you each year at the Passover one prisoner. So shall I release to you the King of the Jews?'

'No! No!' howled the mob. 'Not this man, but Barabbas.'

Barabbas was a notorious ruffian, a highwayman, and a thief. Again Pilate tried to play down to the crude blood-lust and cruelty of the mob. He gave the order to scourge Jesus.

There were two ways of scourging under Roman rule. The

lictors scourged with their rods in Roman towns. But Jerusalem was not Roman; and Pilate had no lictors. So Jesus was tied to a pillar. His back was bared; and a soldier took that dreadful implement of torture, the flagellum, with its long leather thongs, weighted with rough fragments of iron and of lead, and attached to a short, stout wooden handle. Scourging with the flagellum was an atrocious torture that often drove mad the victims whom it did not kill. The soldier brought its lacerating thongs down on Jesus' back. The wounds that Jesus suffered there we can even now hardly bear to look at with the eyes of our imagination.

The soldiers unstrapped his quivering body from the pillar. They again caught hold of Herod's robe and flung its crimson mockery over his bleeding back. They took from a bundle that lay by a brazier some twigs of a resinous thorn-bush used for lighting fires. Twisting the twigs into a circle they crushed it down on his forehead as a crown—a crown of thorns—till the blood ran down his cheeks. They picked out a bulrush from a great vase. This they thrust in his hand for a mock sceptre. Then the brutes—soldiers they called themselves—strutted up to him, and, his hands being shackled, smote him on the face with their hands, saluting him with guffaws of coarse laughter:

'Hail, King of the Jews!'

The mob was straining at the leash now. Pilate went out to them.

'See,' he cried, 'I am bringing him out to you. Understand clearly, I cannot find any crime in him.'

Then he gave an order. Jesus was led from the hall on to the balcony to face the raging crowd on the sunlit Pavement.

'See,' cried Pilate again, 'there is the man.'

Jesus came into view bearing his crown of thorns on his head and his mock robe on his mangled back, the one royal figure in that bestial scene. Caiaphas and the other Sanhedrin members led the now frantic shouts of the crowd:

'To the cross! To the cross!' they yelled.

Pilate threw down the reins of power into the hands of the mob. The majesty of Rome surrendered to the clamour of a crowd led by a coldly cruel priest.

'Take him and crucify him yourselves,' he rapped at them.

'We have a law,' Caiaphas and the priests and scribes shouted back; 'and by that law he is bound to die, because he has made himself out to be the Son of God.'

'God's Son.'

Pilate started. He was frightened. His wife's dream! What if, after all . . . ! Those eyes, that face of Jesus, those words of his about his Kingdom being not of this world. Pilate, like all sceptics, was afraid of the unseen. With fear in his soul, Pilate, more alarmed than ever, called Jesus back into the Praetorium.

'Where do you come from?' he asked Jesus.

Jesus made no reply. What was the use? Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. He had said so again and again. But with the coward in Pilate's heart it was useless to argue.

'You will not speak to me?' cried Pilate, leaning forward. 'Do you not know that it is in my power to release you or to crucify you.'

'You would have no power over me,' replied Jesus, 'had it not been conferred on you from above.' And then with a marvellous justice, he who had suffered the torture of scourging and the shame of mockery at the hands of Pilate's soldiers, said:

'On that account he who delivered me up is more guilty than you are.'

Pilate was now more eager than ever to release Jesus. He came out to say so again. But there was one more weapon—a terrible javelin—in Caiaphas' armoury. He launched it through the lips of his mob.

'If you set him free,' the shout went up, 'you are no friend of Caesar's. Any one who makes himself a King is a rebel against Caesar.'

It was a subtle, barbed threat; this veiled menace of im-

peaching Pilate before the Emperor for treason. So long as it had been a question of religion—of belief and custom of worship—Pilate stuck to his will to release Jesus. But now! If Pilate had had a good record and a clean conscience he could have defied Caiaphas and the mob. But in that moment the panorama of his crimes as an administrator flashed before his eyes. He recalled that day when he had outraged and defiled the Holy City by forcing the Roman eagles into Jerusalem; that other day, too, when he had forcibly robbed the Temple treasury to cover the cost of making a new aqueduct; the day, also, when he sent his soldiers disguised in Jewish robes with daggers hidden under their cloaks with orders to massacre the mob that was threatening to revolt against his tyranny. All that black story and many other deeds of harsh, overbearing tyranny sprang before Pilate's eyes in that moment. He knew that Caiaphas and Annas and the Sanhedrin never would forgive what he had done then. He knew that they would leap at the chance of bringing a damaging charge against Pilate to the throne of Caesar.[1]

Impeachment! That was what was threatened when the crowd shouted, at Caiaphas' crafty instigation, 'You are no friend of Caesar's.' Pilate's reputation was at stake; his career; even his life. The cry, 'You are no patriot,' beat Pilate to his knees. The Roman Procurator gave way. Law, justice, reason, liberty, truth—all went crashing down before a Jerusalem mob whipped to frenzy by the cold gale of Caiaphas' fury.

Pilate led Jesus out and put him on a marble chair before the mob.

'Behold your King,' he cried.

'Off with him; away with him!' they howled.

[1] See Chapter XIV. Some years later, after he had massacred many people in putting down a small rebellion, Pilate was actually ordered to appear before Caesar in Rome to answer to the accusations of the Jews. He never returned. Nothing is known of his later career. Legend says that he took his own life and lies buried in a little lake high up on the Swiss mountain that has been named after him—Pilatus.

'Crucify him.'

'Crucify your King?' exclaimed Pilate.

'We have no king but Caesar,' retorted Caiaphas.

Pilate gave an order. A slave brought him a basin of water. With a fatuous silliness unworthy of himself or of his office, the Procurator put the last melodramatic touch to his tragic cowardice. Pilate dipped his hands into the water, saying to Caiaphas and the crowd:

'I am innocent of this good man's blood. It is your affair.'

'His blood be on us and on our children,' shouted the priests and their intoxicated gang of dupes.

Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. Barabbas, brigand and bravo, he released.

CHAPTER LXIV

THE KING ON THE CROSS

PILATE called an officer and gave him his order. Out of the gallows store under the Fortress of Antony across the way soldiers lugged one of the scores of crosses that were heaped there ready for use.

There were three kinds of crosses. One was shaped like an 'X'; the second like a 'T'; but the third, which was that used for Jesus, had a piece jutting above the cross-bar thus †. To crucify a criminal the cross was laid on the ground and the man put upon it with his arms stretched out along the side beams. A nail was driven through the palms of each hand, fixing them to the top bar or bars, and his feet likewise. The cross was then lifted and the foot of it was dropped into a hole in the ground. The victim hung there until either the torture or the loss of blood killed him.

Invented by the Phoenicians in their cities of Tyre and Sidon, the Tyrian rulers carried the hideous instruments in their warships across the seas to their colonies, like Carthage in North Africa. The Romans learned from their enemies in North Africa, the Carthaginians, this punishment that made the hardiest criminal shiver with cold terror. It was a useful tool, the Romans saw, for cowing rebellion. For the threat of it set the bravest Gaul or Egyptian or Syrian cringing for mercy. It was so horrible that even the Romans reserved it for slaves and for the basest criminals as well as for rebel subjects in the provinces of the Empire.[1] The famous Roman ruler and orator Cicero, who had been Caesar's representative in the city of Tarsus in the century before Jesus lived, called it 'the most cruel and terrible of all tortures'.

Jesus' crucifixion was unlike any other in this, that he alone, seeing far ahead that if he taught as he did the Good

[1] See Seneca, Epistola vii. Seneca was born about the same year as Jesus.

News of the Love of God, the Sanhedrin would surely have him crucified by the Procurator, yet deliberately went forward with a bravery so marvellous that it baffles the imagination, and walked straight on in the path that led to that death. He walked the way that led to the cross knowing what he did.

Pilate called another officer and gave another order. An oblong thin board was brought to him by a slave, while another carried a pot of sepia paint and in it a brush. Then Pilate's scribe was called—a man learned in all the three languages of Jerusalem: the Hebrew of the Jews, the Greek that was the *lingua franca* of intercourse across the whole Empire, the Latin of the Roman rulers. At Pilate's dictation the scribe painted on the board in those three languages:

JESUS THE NAZARENE
KING OF THE JEWS

This board was handed to the herald who always carried in front of a criminal going to be crucified a board giving the name of the man and saying what was his crime. The herald came out and standing before Jesus held up the board that all might see. Some of the priests, seeing this, were furious and went to the steps of the Praetorium and asked for word with Pilate.

'Do not write "King of the Jews" ' they demanded, 'but put "He said, 'I am King of the Jews.' " '[1]

Pilate, jaded, furious and humiliated by the way he had been worsted in the struggle through which he had gone, refused.

'What I have written, I have written,' he snapped.

Prodding Jesus forward with an iron-pointed goad, a soldier hoisted the cross on to his shoulder. He started

[1] It is curious that even to-day all public notices in Palestine are in three languages—Arabic, the common language of the people—the *lingua franca* of the country; Hebrew, the language of the Jewish minority; English, the language of the government.

slowly along the paved way. The priests and scribes, glowing with self-congratulation, hurried away to the Temple. They must get to their sacred work. It was already the hour for the Passover sacrifice of the lambs at the altar of the Holy of Holies!

As the priests, having entered the Temple courts, reached the Holy Place, a strange wild figure dashed through the outer courts, up the steps, and into the Sanctuary. With frenzied bloodshot eyes the man came on, grasping something tightly in his right hand. Lifting his hand above his head he flung thirty pieces of silver clanging on the marble floor.

'I have sinned; I have sinned,' wailed Judas. 'I have betrayed innocent blood.'

'What is that to us?' sneered the priests. 'That is your affair—not ours.'

Judas broke away and hurried out through the Temple courts—anywhere to get away from the memory that broke his heart. His brain reeled with the thought of what he had done; his Lord, his Master, the Man of Love, the Son of God, with whom he had broken bread and walked and talked in the highways and byways of the land, had been scourged—condemned—and all the time innocent. Even now he was walking to Golgotha to be nailed to the bitter cross—and it was he—he, Judas, who had betrayed him. What devil had driven him to it? But, hasten as he would, Judas could not outstrip the vision that hunted and haunted him, that put him in the torment of hell. He fled out into the hills. He unwound his girdle from his robe and on a tree he hanged himself.

The priests grovelled on the floor for the pieces of silver.

'We cannot put that money back into "Korban," the treasury,' they said, 'for it is the price of blood.'

So they bought a field on the hill-side to the south-east of Jerusalem that was used by potters for getting clay for moulding their jars. That field they converted into a graveyard in which to bury aliens from other lands who died when

in Jerusalem, and who—being foreigners—could not be buried among the Jews.

Jesus, meanwhile, tottered forward under the weight of the cross. For over thirty hours he had not slept. The wearing strain of the Last Supper, the agony of spirit in the Garden of Gethsemane had drained nerve and heart. All through the dreadful night and morning without rest or food he had suffered fearful things at the hands of cruel men. He had been dragged, bound, to Annas, where he was buffeted by the police; taken to Caiaphas, where he was smitten in the face and made the victim of brutal horseplay; hauled off to Herod's presence, where he was reviled and made the butt of the tyrant's bestial court; hailed back to Pilate's Praetorium, where the scourging had drained blood and lacerated nerve. So Jesus, lithe and sinewy though he was and in the prime of strong manhood, could now barely stagger along the way with the heavy wood on his shoulder.

He moved on, visibly weakening at every step. As they came to the city gate, he staggered and fell fainting to the ground. A sturdy Jew from Africa, just coming into the city from the country, stood watching. He was named Simon. He came from Cyrene on the coast of North Africa, opposite to the Island of Crete. He was father of two young sons called Alexander and Rufus, who later became followers of the Way of Jesus. The soldiers laid hold of this powerful African and made him take the cross on his sturdy shoulders and carry it behind Jesus.

A multitude now thronged the narrow way. To the hard, fickle, cynical Jerusalem mob that had, spurred on by Caiaphas, yelled for Jesus' death, the pilgrims began now to bring a new note. Tender-hearted women of Jerusalem in the crowd cried out, wailing and beating their breasts, lamenting that Jesus was going to his death.

Jesus, relieved of the weight of the cross, turned toward them.

'Daughters of Jerusalem,' he said, 'weep not for me; but

weep for yourselves and for your children! For there are days coming when the cry will go up:

'Happy are the women who have no children,
Those who have never borne babies or nursed them!'

'Then,' he went on, with the words of Hosea the prophet of love in his mind, 'the people will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us."[1] If what you see is done when the wood is green, what will they do when the wood is dry?'

It was not the Jewish pilgrims—the real nation—nor the devout Jews, who called for Jesus' death. Indeed, it was fear that the ordinary Jewish people—the pilgrims—might rise in Jesus' favour that the Temple leaders hurried on the trial. The authors of Jesus' death were the small avaricious place-proud inner group of Temple rulers who saw in him and his teaching the end of their monopoly of place and pelf and power. And their allies were the citizens of Jerusalem who toadied to them for their trade.

At last, outside the city gate, on a slight hill, Jesus reached the place of crucifixion, called the Place of a Skull—or Golgotha. Lifting the cross from the shoulders of Simon the soldiers laid it on the ground. On either side of it another cross was laid, for two robbers had also been condemned to die that morning.

Some of the goodwives of Jerusalem, although they could not prevent the Romans from crucifying criminals, wished in some way to make the horror of their suffering less. So they used to mix what they called 'the wine of heaviness', the *vinum languidum*—a brew made of the fermented juice of grapes into which some grains of the gum called *balsamodendron myrrha* had been thrown. They gave this drugged wine to the victims to deaden the pain. They found a sanction for doing this in the Scroll of the Proverbs, where it says:

'Give heavy drink unto him that is ready to perish.'

[1] Hosea x. 8.

As Jesus stood there these kindly women brought him a cup of this wine to drink before the nails were driven into his hands and his feet. He set the cup to his lips. Directly his lips touched it, he recognized that it was drugged. So he would not drink it. This he did because—as we shall see—he had still work to do, and he willed, with a gallant courage that nothing could break, to face life and death and all their pain with his powers of spirit and mind undimmed.

The four soldiers who were told off to carry out the crucifixion stripped Jesus' clothes from his back as they did from those of the two thieves. Then he was laid down on the cross with his arms outstretched on the cross-bar and his legs and feet on the upright. As the soldiers nailed his hands and feet Jesus cried out. It was a cry to his Father. But even then it was not a cry for himself.

'Father,' he called aloud, 'forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

Who could have heard that? Not the disciples, for they were away at a distance. Only these kindly Jewish women with their merciful offering, through whom it came to the writer, who got so much of his special knowledge from women, Luke—who alone reports it.

Above his head the board was nailed with its name and title:

JESUS THE NAZARENE
KING OF THE JEWS

Then the four soldiers, lifting the cross and its burden, thrust the end of the wood into the socket cut in the rock. Having done this, they sat down on the rock. A criminal's clothes were looked upon as a perquisite of the soldiers who crucified him. The quaternion of soldiers divided Jesus' clothes among them. His cloak, however, was woven in a single piece. To cut it up would have made it of little value. So one of the soldiers said to the others: 'Do not let us tear it. Let us draw lots to see who gets it.' This they accordingly did.

'Ha! ha! boaster,' jeered some of those who had been at

the trial in Caiaphas' palace. 'You, who can destroy the Temple and build it in three days; if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.'

Some of the priests from the Temple, even members of the Sanhedrin, came by and joined in the ribald sneers.

'He saved others; himself he cannot save,' they sniggered.

'Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross so that we may see and believe. He trusted in God. Very well, let God deliver him now, if he cares for him,[1] for he said, "I am the Son of God." '

The soldiers stayed there on guard as usual, to see that no rescue of the criminals was attempted. They had a jar of a crude, vinegary wine called 'posca', the only drink that they were allowed to take when on duty. The jeering of the rulers gave them the cue for amusing themselves. Reading the Latin inscription above Jesus' head, they drank mock healths to 'the King', who had thought that he could overcome the Romans. Then they handed him some of their 'posca' in ridicule, saying:

'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.'

They said this as they thought he pretended to the Jewish throne and rebelled against Rome. Hearing the medley of derision and scoffing, one of the criminals joined in. Turning his head, he taunted Jesus.

'Are you not the Christ?' he sneered. 'Then save yourself and us as well!'

His brother criminal, however, rebuffed him.

'Have you not,' he asked, 'any fear of God, now that you are under the same punishment? And we justly so, for we are only getting what we deserve; but this man has not done anything wrong.'

Then, turning from the thief to the Master, he said:

'Jesus, do not forget me when you have come into your Kingdom.'

[1] Quoting Psalm xxii—one of whose sentences some hours later Jesus cried out in his last agony.

'I tell you,' Jesus answered, 'you shall be with me this very day in Paradise.'

Meanwhile, the noise had gone out among the pilgrims that their prophet, the Messiah, whose entrance into Jerusalem they had hailed at the beginning of the week, had been nailed to a cross as a rebel and a blasphemer. Thousands hastened to the place. But they could do nothing, save watch and mourn. As though the gloom in their hearts were shared by the world of nature, a heavy pall of darkness spread across the sky about midday. Nor did it lift until three hours later when an earthquake rocked the land. It was sudden and short, but so severe that it wrenched in two the great curtain that veiled the Holy Place of the Temple.

Through these hours the disciples and the women who had followed with Jesus all the way from Galilee in his last long journey—Mary the mother of James and of Joses, and Zebedee's wife, the mother of the two disciples, James and John—stood with Mary of Magdala on the rocky hill-side. They did not come near to the cross, but remained a good way off watching as Jesus' strength slowly ebbed. For them this was the end of everything. Their hopes were in ruin. The Master of their lives hung dying there. The sheep were scattered. The cause was lost.

Jesus had warned them again and again of his coming death. Repeatedly he had tried to show them that beyond the death lay life, and that to hold out to the end without flinching or lowering the flag of love is the victory that overcomes the world. But it was all contrary to the expectation that they had always held of a triumphant Messiah. Although they heard his words, they had never grasped the truth. To only one of all his disciples was Jesus able to say a word before he died.

John took Jesus' mother by the hand and led her up the rocky slope nearer to the cross, so that her Son could see her once more and she him. Mary of Magdala and Mary the wife of Cleopas went with her and John. By this time Jesus

had little strength left. Yet his final thought was to give to his mother some one who would in some manner take his place. He had enough strength to whisper two short sentences.

'O woman,' he said to his mother, 'behold your son.'

'O son,' he said to his loved comrade, John, 'behold your mother.'

From that hour this disciple took her to his home.

The afternoon wore on. A murmur broke from Jesus' lips: 'I thirst,' he gasped.

A soldier took the small sponge that played the part of a cork in the jar of sour wine that they were sharing, soaked it with the 'posca', and fixing it on the point of his javelin held it up to Jesus' parched lips. Jesus bowed his head in agony. It was a torture of spirit as well as body. He was cut off from men. Judas had betrayed him. The Eleven had fled. Peter cursing had denied him. The leaders of his nation who had hounded him to death gloated over his agony. He was in stark loneliness. Rome, the mistress of the world, had sentenced him to this dreadful death. But now the blackness of a more horrible solitude swept over him. What of God? At his baptism God had spoken to him: 'Thou art my Son.' On the mountain, in the central crisis of his work the Voice again came to him: 'This is my beloved Son. Hear him.' Surely in Jesus' last and loneliest hour of agony and isolation God would speak again.

The Father was silent.

A fathomless tide of darkness engulfed Jesus. Out of the depths he cried:

'My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?'

Did Jesus for that space go down into the last pit of horror where the spirit is utterly cut off, not only from man, but from God? To Jesus the eclipse of God would mean that he had no Father, that all his teaching was vain, that the very Kingdom came crashing down in ruin. Into that loneliness we cannot follow Jesus. We can only bow our heads and—even

in our grief—be thankful that there is no last dread man can go through which he did not face.

Then into the dark, light began to break. The cry that had broken from his lips was the opening of that strange, haunting song which Jesus had known by heart from boyhood—the song where dreadful tragedy is at length lost in triumph.[1] The song has in it those jeering words that the scribes and elders only an hour ago had cried to him on the cross:

> 'He trusted in God that he would deliver him;
> Let him deliver him.'

But at the last it breaks into the victorious cry:

> 'All the ends of the world shall remember,
> And return to the Lord:
> And all the kindreds of the nations
> Shall worship before thee.'

So light came stealing in, healing Jesus' spirit.

His cry had come in Aramaic—the speech of Jesus' homeland: 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'

'Let us see if Elijah does come and take him down,' said they. They thought he was calling for Elijah, who, all the Jews believed, would come back to earth before the Messiah appeared.

A Roman centurion stood now before him watching, listening.

Jesus knew that the end had come. But the end that was in truth a new beginning—the new beginning for the world. In an access of strength, he cried out in a loud voice to the heavens in words that came from the song he had learned as a boy:[2]

'Father, to Thy hands I trust my spirit.'

Then he said: 'It is finished.'

His head bowed. He gave up his spirit.

[1] Psalm xxii.

[2] Psalm xxxi. 5.

CHAPTER LXV

THE PRINCE OF LIFE

WHEN Jesus' head fell on his breast the multitude of watching pilgrims bowed in grief. Turning their backs to the hill of the three crosses, they went down to the city beating their breasts. The disciples and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood there, unable to leave him, yet unable to do anything to help—dumb with anguish.

The Roman centurion who had been standing watching there cried out to God in wonder and reverence at the spirit that he had seen in Jesus—nailed as a criminal upon the shameful cross by order of the Roman Procurator.

'Beyond question,' he cried, 'this man was innocent.'

The priests, anxious for nothing save that their own lives should be undisturbed, their pride of place unbroken, and that the usual order of sacrifices should go on, crowned their day's work with a final brutality. It was now after three in the afternoon. At six o'clock the Sabbath would begin and with it the Feast of the Passover. Caiaphas sent priests to Pilate with this message.

'It is the day of the Preparation for the Sabbath and for the Passover. The bodies on the cross would defile that day. Give orders then to kill them at once before sunset.'

They were asking for the use of the *crurifragium*. If the crucified criminal did not die soon enough, men were sent to beat the life out of him. Pilate gave the order to do this. The soldiers found that Jesus was already dead. To make quite sure, however, one of the soldiers drove his javelin into Jesus' side.

In a very short time before sunset the three bodies would be taken down. They would be thrown out on to the everlasting fire of public refuse in the valley of Gehenna, as was usually done in Jerusalem with the bodies of crucified criminals.

Two rich men, members of the Sanhedrin, were watching all this. They were standing in an orchard, close at hand. While they watched they were making plans together. When they saw what was afoot, both of them hurried away into the city.

One of them was Nicodemus. The name of the other was Joseph of Arimathaea, a native of the hill city in which the prophet Samuel was born. The orchard where they stood belonged to him. In it he had hewn a tomb out of the rock, as he wished to be buried there when he died. Joseph had for some time been secretly a disciple of Jesus. But, like his friend Nicodemus, he had never dared to come out openly and say so. For both Joseph and Nicodemus would have been driven out of the Sanhedrin, banned from the fellowship of the Synagogue, and cursed with the threefold anathema. What thoughts were theirs as they looked at Jesus dead on the cross and recalled that they had not fought in the Sanhedrin against Annas and Caiaphas for his life!

Nicodemus now started off to the city. He made straight for the Bazaar of Spices. There the merchant showed him jars, alabaster boxes, and urns full of the rarest spices of the east.

'What do you wish?' asked the spice-merchant.

'Myrrh,' replied Nicodemus, 'myrrh and gall.' Gall is the wood of aloes for embalming the dead.

'How much?' asked the merchant.

'A hundred pounds' weight,' said Nicodemus.

The merchant was astounded. It was enough for the burial of a king. Throwing a heap of glittering coins down before the trader, Nicodemus hurried back up the streets, through the city gate, and to the Hill of the Skull.

His friend, Joseph of Arimathaea, had meanwhile hastened across to the Praetorium to seek audience with Pilate. Joseph's purse, too, was stuffed with gold; for Pilate had earned the reputation of not being above taking a bribe and —when he did take one—of requiring a large sum. Taking

his courage in both hands, Joseph went straight to the Procurator.

'I want you to let me take the body of Jesus the Nazarene, who is crucified and has now died, so that I may give him burial in a tomb that I have.'

Pilate could hardly believe that Jesus was dead. Was this not, he thought, a crafty plan for getting Jesus alive down from the cross, and hiding him until he was well again? Pilate sent a swift messenger running to Golgotha to call the centurion on duty there to come to the Praetorium. The officer came down from Golgotha.

'Is Jesus already dead?' asked Pilate.

'He has been dead for some time,' the centurion assured him.

So Pilate there and then, with no thought of bribe, gave the centurion authority to have Jesus' body taken down from the cross and given to Joseph.

In hot haste Joseph left Pilate. For there was little time now before sunset—when both the Sabbath and the Passover began. He hurried into the Bazaar of the Weavers. There he bought a sheet of the finest flaxen linen. Returning to the hill, he found Nicodemus already there with his myrrh and aloes. The cross was taken down. Jesus was lifted from it. With gentle hands the men, helped by the women who now came near, wrapped Jesus in the new linen sheet and his head in separate swathes. They hurriedly put about him the spices that Nicodemus' love had bought, leaving till later the proper embalming of his body. So they carried him into the orchard, followed by the women—Mary, his mother, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and others. They laid him upon the ledge that was hewn in the tomb in the steep rock-scarp. A massive, flat, circular stone, set ready on its edge in a groove in the rock, was now rolled along till it covered the opening of the tomb. Night fell. The Sabbath Passover began.

The women who had been following him with the disciples

PLATE XXXI

'Two women crept out like shadows from the city to the orchard.'

took careful note of the place where the Lord was laid, whom they loved more than life itself. They then went away to their lodging-places and their homes to prepare spices for embalming Jesus' body when the Passover was over.

Dawn broke. The hours of the Sabbath-Passover went by. The myriads of pilgrims swarmed in the Temple. The disciples met together in the upper room where they had supped with Jesus. For them the end had come. The fellowship was broken. The dream had vanished. They had hoped that through Jesus the Kingdom would come. But wrong had triumphed. All was over. Black, unrelieved tragedy crushed their spirits.

Night fell again. As the first glimmer of dawn touched the roofs of Jerusalem, two women, Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James, crept out like shadows from the city to the orchard. They bore spices that they had prepared for embalming Jesus. They discussed as they went along how they should get that heavy stone rolled away from the mouth of the cave-tomb.

When they came to the grave, to their amazement the great stone was already rolled away. The grave was open! Going nearer they looked in fearfully. By the ghostly half-light of the dawn they saw a young man dressed in white sitting there.[1] Their first thought was that enemies had broken open the grave and had carried Jesus away—thrown him, maybe, into Gehenna. They were terrified. The young man spoke.

'Do not be frightened,' he said. ' You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified? He is risen; he is not here. Look, that is the place where he was laid. Go you and give his disciples—and especially Peter—this message. "He goes ahead of you to Galilee. You shall see him there, as he told you." '

Trembling, the women hardly took in what was said to them. Beside themselves, they ran with fluttering garments

[1] Was it John Mark? He alone tells of this watcher at the grave, as he alone speaks of the youth in Gethsemane.

at breathless speed to Peter and John. When they reached them, the two Marys stammered out a confused story of their astounding experience. The two disciples could hardly understand them. Indeed, they did not—they could not—believe what they did understand, which was the one fact that shines clear amid all the confusion and contradiction of the records—the fact that Jesus Christ had risen.[1] The incredible news put lightning in the heels of Peter and John. They started to run to the tomb; the wind streaming through their hair; their short tunics fluttering about their knees.

John was the younger and swifter. He got there first. Stooping down he looked in. There, sure enough, he saw the linen cloths lying on the ground. Touched with a feeling —half awe, half fear—he did not go in. Peter, breathless, now reached the tomb. He saw what John had seen. Impetuously he stooped and went in. In the half-light, as Peter's eyes grew accustomed to it, he saw the cloths lying, but the bandage that had been about the head of Jesus lay folded by itself, instead of with the other cloths. He called out to John, who went into the tomb and saw just how things were.

Mary of Magdala had come back as swiftly as she could behind them and now reached the grave. When the two men left to go back to Jerusalem, she stayed on. Her Lord was gone. She broke down and sobbed. She saw two figures inside the tomb.

'Woman,' came a voice, 'why are you sobbing?'

'Because they have taken away my Master,' she said. Turning round she saw a Man standing there.

'Woman,' he repeated, 'why are you sobbing?'

'Oh, sir,' she cried, clutching at a straw of hope and thinking that this was the gardener of the orchard, 'if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him. I will remove him.'

[1] See Appendix, note 9.

'Mary,' he said. At that familiar word she knew the voice, and crying 'Rabboni!' she leapt towards him with hands outstretched and grasped his arm.

'Do not cling to me,' he said quickly. She dropped her hands, for she caught in his words and voice the note, a new note, of divine majesty, and of the life of the world of pure spirit.

'Go to my brothers,' he went on, 'and tell them "I am ascending to my Father and yours, to my God and yours." '

Obediently she turned and made her way with all speed to the upper room. As she opened the door and went in, they could see that her face was transformed. The sobs had ceased; the grief had gone; her eyes shone with astonishment and joy.

'I have seen the Master,' she cried; 'I have *seen* him.'

They came round her and listened. At first they heard with unbelieving ears.

'She is beside herself,' they said to one another. Her fevered, grief-crushed brain was delirious, they were convinced. Gradually, gleams of bewildered hope dawned that after all it might be true.

On the afternoon of that day two of the disciples, one named Cleophas, started from Jerusalem to walk to their home. They lived in a village called Emmaus, on the Roman road that ran south-west from Jerusalem. Following the hillside for some way, the road then carried them away to the right steeply down the Valley of Sorea till they came to a beautiful spring by a village on the slope of the mountain that rose sharply above them. As they went along they discussed the overwhelming happenings of the past few days. Near the spring a stranger came near to them and walked alongside.

'What is all this that you are discussing on your walk?' he asked.

They looked at him in sheer amazement.

'Are you a stranger living all alone in Jerusalem that you

know nothing of the things that have just been happening in the city?' exclaimed Cleophas.

'What things?' he asked.

'All about Jesus the Nazarene,' they answered eagerly, together. 'In the eyes of God and of all the people he was a prophet strong in his deeds and his words; but the high-priests and our government gave him up to be sentenced to death. For ourselves,' Cleophas went on, 'we hoped that he would be the redeemer of Israel;' but, and his voice sank, 'he is dead—and that three days ago. Though some women among our number gave us a surprise to-day. They were at the tomb early in the morning and could not find his body. But they came to us and declared to us that they had actually seen a vision of messengers of God who said that he was alive. Some of our brethren found it just as the woman had said; but,' Cleophas concluded sadly, 'him they did not see.'

The stranger broke the silence.

'O dull-witted men,' he said, 'with your hearts so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer thus and so enter into his glory?'

With that he began to quote what Moses had said, and Isaiah and all the others, who had with their words of flame told of the day when the Prince of God would come to save the people and of the Suffering Servant of God. As he talked their hearts were strangely warmed. New light came shining, not only on the words of the ancient scrolls, but on their own lives. They began to see that what they thought was the end might after all be the beginning—the beginning of everything for them and for the world.

As the stranger talked with them, they passed through a deep narrow gorge between mountains whose sides were covered with vineyards and out into open country again by orchards of pomegranate, quince, and citron. Then they bore north-west through olive groves and a village at whose centre several Roman roads crossed. Taking the western

road, they soon passed the eighth milestone from Jerusalem and came to the village of Emmaus. As they paced along the straight Roman road through the village, Cleophas and his friend stopped; for they had reached home, a simple, little, oblong house with thick walls. It lay on the left-hand side of the Roman paved road.[1]

He took some steps as though to go on.

'Stay with us,' they pressed him, pointing to the western sky; 'see, it is getting towards evening. The sun is setting.'

So he went into the house to stay with them. As they reclined at table by the dim light of the wall-lamps, he took up the loaf and said a blessing. Then he broke it. The familiar gesture! Their eyes were opened now. But even as they recognized Jesus, he went from their sight.

'Did not our hearts glow within us,' they said to one another with eyes beaming with joy, 'as he talked with us on the road, opening up the Scripture for us?'

They were so excited; they thrilled with such a joy that they simply could not rest till they had told the news to their brothers in the Lord's comradeship. Leaping to their feet, they strapped on their sandals, grasped their staves and, tucking in their robes under their girdles, in a few moments were off in the gathering darkness up the road to Jerusalem. Within two hours, walking as fast as they could go, they reached the city. Tired as they were they bounded up the steps into the upper room. The atmosphere there was quick with excitement. The disciples cried out as they came in:

'The Master has not only risen: he has appeared to Simon.'

No one knew; no one will ever know what happened when Jesus met Simon. What would the Lord do when he met again face to face the man who had cursed and sworn as he repudiated his Master in the hour before the agony of the

[1] The foundations of the house are still there in a church of Byzantine date which was entirely lost to sight till 1873, and only properly opened up in 1901. With the site of the house of the Last Supper in Jerusalem, this is the place that, by self-evidencing truth and fitness and by the record, is—to the writer—the most convincing relic of those days.

cross? And what would Peter do? Something happened so intimately sacred that Peter never could and never did tell. What happened in Peter, however, is more eloquent than any record could be of what happened to him. For the blundering, fitful, wayward, passionate disciple from that hour led the followers of Jesus with a courage that never faltered or failed till he, too, at last was nailed to his cross.

Cleophas and his friend from Emmaus told their wonderful story to the others. In that upper room that night the disciples met behind closed doors; for the Sanhedrin was alert to crush every trace of the Nazarene movement. Then —they hardly knew how—Jesus was there, in the room. They heard his voice bringing the familiar greeting that every man said on coming into a house, but saying it with a meaning in it that had never been there in all the story of man.

'Peace be with you!'

Lifting his hands they saw in the palms the wounds of the nails; and in his side was the wound of the javelin. Joy beyond all words bounded in the hearts of the disciples. Their eyes shone; but, in the presence of what they felt to be the holy majesty and power of the spirit of God, their lips were still. Jesus said again:

'Peace be with you! As the Father sent me forth, so I send you forth.' Breathing upon them he said, 'Receive the holy Spirit.' Then he went from them again.

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas, whose nickname was 'The Twin', was not there that evening when Jesus came. When Thomas came in the rest of the disciples crowded round him, saying:

'We have seen the Lord.'

He would not, he could not, believe what they said. It was hallucination, a ghostly vision; it could not be the Lord himself in bodily form. They retold their story.

'No!' he stoutly said; 'unless I see his hands with the mark of the nails, and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe it.'

A week went by. Again they met, on the first day of the week, in the same room. Again the greeting:

'Peace be with you!'

Jesus, turning to Thomas, beckoned him.

'Place your finger here,' he said; 'look at my hands. Place your hand here in my side. Do not refuse to believe, but believe.'

'My Master,' cried Thomas, then, the sceptic soaring to heights of faith and vision that none other had touched, 'and my God!'

'Is it because you have seen me,' Jesus said, 'that you have believed? Happy are they who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Again he went from their sight.

CHAPTER LXVI

FOLLOW ME

'HE goes ahead of you to Galilee.' So the young man in the tomb had said.

As they talked together, the Twelve recalled how Jesus had said before his death that he wished to meet them in Galilee in the old haunts. So the Eleven went up the roads northward, but for the first time they walked without him. Reaching the lake, they went into Capernaum. Peter stepped once more into the doorway of his home. Fretting for action, he found the waiting difficult. For Jesus did not appear.

Jesus was indeed in Galilee; but not yet with them. On one of those days James, the brother of Jesus, who had, like the other brothers and the sisters at Nazareth, held that Jesus was out of his senses, was astonished to see the Risen Lord standing before him. They talked together. What Jesus said to his brother is not known. What is certain is that James's life was transformed. He gave his life wholly into the hands of Jesus. Indeed, he became the leader of the comradeship of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem. He wrote a letter of surpassing beauty and truth to the non-Christian Jews dispersed over the Roman Empire. He, at last, was slain too, as a follower of the Christ, by the Jews in the city, where his Brother and Lord had been crucified.

Peter, meanwhile, was anxious to be doing something. He wanted to feel the pull of the sail-rope in his hand, to see his boat swing obedient to his hand at her tiller, and to watch the stars wheel in the sky above him. He longed to feel the boat leap to the call of the breeze and to hear the chatter of the wavelets on her hull, while the net swished out and down into the blue, inviting depths. One evening Simon took a sudden resolve.

'I go a-fishing,' he announced. The others leapt at the thought.

'We are going with you.'

'Dawn flashed over the heights across the lake.'

Sunrise on the Lake of Galilee from the Tiberias shore.

With the nets over their shoulders and all the gear in good trim, they boarded the dinghy: seven of the comrades—Simon Peter, James and John, Thomas and Nathanael, and two others—and pulled out to the fishing-smack. Peter cast off his clothing and stood, as he swung his net, a living statue in bronze. He found the labour good. All night they toiled. but the fish were away, it seemed.

Dawn flashed over the Gadara heights across the lake. A cock crowed in a village, and then another. Peter winced.

Mistily in the half-light they saw the form of a stranger on the beach, a little more than a hundred yards away.

'Fellows,' a voice hailed them, 'have you any fish?'

'No,' their disappointed voices came back.

'Cast your net to the starboard side of the boat,' cried the Voice, 'and you will find fish.'

Heaving together at the net they swung it out again to the starboard. Then they pulled. It was heavy with fish, so heavy that the seven men could not haul it in.

John's swift, sensitive mind leapt to the truth.

'It is the Master,' he cried to Peter.

Peter, to whom action was easier than words, seized his fisher's tunic, threw it on, and in a flash swung over the gunwale into the lake. He swam, splashed and waded as fast as arms and legs would carry him the hundred yards that separated him from Jesus. There he stood gasping, the rays of the rising sun gleaming on his tanned wet skin. But in his eyes glowed a light, not of the sun, but of the fire of joy and love and worship.

The rest of the disciples came ashore in the jolly-boat that swung at the stern of Peter's fishing-smack. With them they dragged ashore their netful of fish.

As they neared the shore they saw the red gleam of a fire on the beach. Fish were grilling over it. By the fire was some bread.

'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught,' Jesus called out.

So Peter went back into the ketch. He hauled with his powerful arms at the straining net—a hundred and fifty-three fish he and John counted, and the net not torn!

'Come and breakfast,' said Jesus.

He took the bread and the fish and gave some to each disciple. When the hungry young fishermen had finished, Jesus turned to Peter.

'Simon, son of John,' he said, 'do you love me more than the others do?'

'Why, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

'Feed my lambs,' said Jesus. There was a pause.

'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' he asked again.

'O, Lord, you know that I love you,' came Peter's wondering, perplexed response.

'Then shepherd my sheep,' Jesus replied.

Jesus paused; then a third time he tested his disciple with the question:

'Simon, son of John, do you love me?'

It distressed Peter—who had thrice denied that he knew Jesus—to be asked a third time 'Do you love me?'

'Master,' he cried in pain, 'you know everything; you know that I love you.'

'Feed my sheep, then,' said Jesus. 'In very truth I tell you, you have put on your own girdle and you have walked wherever you willed in the days of your youth; but when you get old you will stretch out your hands for some one else to gird you, and you will be taken where you do not want to go.'

In those words Jesus opened a window for an instant for Peter through which he could catch a glimpse of the road of adventure that he was now to take over sea and land to carry to the world the greatest Good News that man can hear—that God, the Creator of the Universe, is like Jesus, is love; and at the end of that road was a cross to which the sin of Imperial Rome nailed Simon Peter's hands and feet. Peter, the Rock, never again failed his Master.

'What was to happen to his comrade John? Peter asked.

Jesus answered that that did not concern him.

'Follow thou me,' he repeated.

That was Jesus' last word to Peter, as it had been his first word to him on the same lakeside three years before.

There was, however, one more final command that Jesus had to give to them all, and one last promise. He called them all to meet with him again on the mountain. There he had taught them. Thence he had sent the Twelve out two by two to carry the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the people of their own nation in their own homeland. His disciples, not only of the Jewish people but of every nation and race, were now to become a new nation, an immortal comradeship, a world community whose one bond of unity is that they follow him—are his body.

'Go,' he said, 'and make disciples of all nations; and teach them to obey all the commands that I have given you. And lo, I will be with you all the days, even unto the end of the world.'

APPENDIX

NOTE 1. *Sources for the life of Jesus.*

If we want to get down to the historical truth about Jesus what are the sources?

First we have books about Jesus' life that have come down to us from the century in which he lived.

The earliest writings about Jesus—who was called by his followers 'the Christ', i.e. 'the Anointed', are letters written by a cultured Roman citizen of Jewish race, educated at Tarsus in Cilicia and at Jerusalem, whose Hebrew name was Saul and whose Latin name was Paul. He had been an enthusiastic persecutor of Jesus' followers, but the Risen Christ appeared to him as he was on a tour of persecution. His life was changed and he launched upon amazing journeys to tell people in the great cities of the Roman Empire about Jesus. He began to write letters to the groups of Christ's followers in these different places less than twenty years after Jesus was crucified. The letters are very important as showing what the followers of Jesus felt was most vital about him and how he began to rule the lives of men across the Roman Empire; but they add hardly anything to our knowledge of what he did and said.[1]

The next writing that has come down to us is an account of what Jesus did and said and of the effect on the people. It was done some fifteen years later than Paul's early letters. About A.D. 65 John Mark, in whose mother's house Jesus held his Last Supper with his disciples, and where his followers used to meet after he left them, wrote down, probably at Rome, the things that he had heard about Jesus, and especially what he had learned from one of Jesus' closest friends—the disciple and apostle, Simon Peter. 'Mark,' we are told by a contemporary of his, 'having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ.'[2]

The book bears out what Papias quotes, except that there is—in spite of the disclaimer—a certain rough order of events that shows

[1] The author has told the story of this man and his adventures in a book called *Paul the Dauntless.*

[2] John the Elder, quoted by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor.

a real growth from simple beginnings to national popularity, leading on to official hatred and the teaching of the Twelve by Jesus in order to prepare for the tragedy that lay ahead.

Not more than twenty years later than John Mark's book, i.e. between A.D. 80 and 90, two more volumes were written. One was by Luke, an able, scientific, clear writer, probably a doctor, who travelled with Paul and who took great pains to get the fullest and most accurate accounts of Jesus' life. The other was founded on notes by Matthew and bears his name. These two writers had before them, not only Mark's book, but a now lost anthology of sayings of Jesus as well as other records that go back to a very early date. Unlike Mark's and a still later one called John's Gospel, they both contain stories of Jesus' birth.[1] Matthew's book is probably written up by an anonymous author from notes made by the educated ex-customs officer of Capernaum whom Jesus called to follow him as a disciple.

The last of the four books about the life of Jesus, which are collected in the small library that is called 'The New Testament', is known as John's Gospel. It was written not before A.D. 90, but not after A.D. 110; probably, but not certainly, by a disciple of John, the son of Zebedee, who lived to a great age at or near Ephesus, a great Greek city on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor. It is quite different from the other three Gospels. They tell only of Jesus in Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, and relate only one visit to Jerusalem, when he was crucified. John's Gospel tells of going to and fro, but most of the story is of events in Jerusalem, and very little indeed takes place in Galilee. There are hardly any parables—that is, stories to illustrate truth—in John; while parables are—on the other hand—the main teaching in the other three books. Almost all the parables are about the Kingdom of God; but Jesus' teaching in John consists mostly of talks and arguments, and these discuss, not the Kingdom of God, but Jesus' own relation to God as Son to Father. Some of these talks have developed so far in re-telling that sometimes the transition from what Jesus said to John's or the writer's comment on it is impossible to trace. John's Gospel—which is one of the most wonderful books ever written—is very valuable in throwing light on Jesus' aim and the deeper meaning of his life and death, as seen

[1] These birth-stories are discussed in Note 3.

through more than fifty years of reflection and discussion among Greek-thinking people. Widely differing views are held about the historical authority of the incidents told in it. As will be seen, the author of this life of Jesus believes that there is a graver danger to truth in drastic rejection of John's narratives than in accepting them as largely based on actual events.

The best thing that any life of Jesus can do is to lead those who read it to go back to those four Gospels and read them again and again for themselves, and not read them merely in short, broken sections, but as books—as biographies. The four books seem to contradict each other in many details. Many of these contradictions—as will be seen—disappear on closer examination based on richer scholarship. Those that remain throw into more vivid relief the amazing unity and uniqueness of the personality that they present.

Those four books were written for people living under the Roman Empire and in that Mediterranean world. Many things are difficult for us to understand living long centuries after the Roman Empire has disappeared and surrounded by quite different ways of living. The author of this book has therefore gone again and again to the land where Jesus lived. There, for months at a time, he has moved up and down the land, reading these four books about Jesus on the spot, trying to get deeper into their unfathomable truth; learning more about the life of the Roman Empire of which he was a subject and of the Jewish nation whose blood was in his veins. He has watched the people doing the things about which Jesus spoke—fishing, sowing and reaping, tending sheep and goats, buying and selling, and the rest; walked by the lake on which he sailed and the river in which he was baptized; climbed the hills where he led his men; entered the towns that he visited; watched the birds and trees, the thistles and flowers, the sky and the mountains that he enjoyed. Those who read this book will see how this has helped to make many things clear that are otherwise not easy to grasp and to open up fresh windows into his life.

NOTE 2. *Help in writing this life.*

In Palestine, friends of the author who have lived there for long years and who have given a lifetime to studying the land, the people, and their ways now and in times gone by, have given him wonder-

ful help. They include Miss F. E. Newton, who has lived for over thirty years among the people as a follower of Jesus, and who knows their lives through and through, and who travelled with the author and his wife up and down the land giving lavishly of the treasures of her rich experience; Dr. Christie of Tiberias, who has spent over half a century in study of the people and of the Jews in Jesus' time; Dr. Torrance, who was born in the land, and as a doctor, healing folk on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, is very close to the life of Jesus; Brother Jacob Spafford of the American Colony, Jerusalem, who, having lived his whole life there, has unsurpassed knowledge of the life of Jesus in its actual surroundings; Mr. Toister, a Jew living on Mount Carmel; and Canon Hanauer of Jerusalem, whose scholarship is universally known. Not only have all of these helped in the way indicated; but the first four have read the whole manuscript of this book and have given invaluable criticism and suggestion. So has also Professor Vernon Bartlet of Mansfield College, Oxford, giving his great knowledge of the Gospels, and of the life of the Jews and of the Roman Empire in Jesus' time, and Mr. Frederick Page of the Oxford University Press who has brought his penetrating and illuminating critical conscience and vision to bear on every line of the book, in manuscript and in proof, to its untold benefit, as well as Mr. Tracy Strong of Geneva and his sons and daughter, and Mr. Franklin Cogswell and Mr. Milton Stauffer of New York, and Mrs. Humphrey Milford, reading from the point of view of the boy and girl of to-day. Mr. P. I. Painter, author of *The Man of Nazareth*, has by his profound insight into Jesus' life and the creative acumen of his New Testament Scholarship enriched the author's mind incalculably. These friends must not be held responsible for anything that is in the book; but they are responsible for untold help in freeing it from many defects and in enriching it.

The author and his wife owe more than can be expressed to Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Cadbury, who crowned years of generous help by an affectionate and sensitive hospitality which provided a retreat for some months in a remote and peaceful valley where the book has been brought to completion. The happy and enthusiastic co-operation of Mr. John Johnson and his expert staff at the Clarendon Press in Oxford in making the book so beautiful as a piece of craftsmanship has made these last stages a time of pure

joy. The book owes its very existence to the sustained and unwearied co-operation through these years of Miss Eleanor Griggs, who has again and again shouldered the immense task of typing and retyping numerous copies of the entire manuscript in one revised form after another, and has organized and carried through the complicated correspondence by which each section of the book has been submitted in manuscript to many of the above friends in so many different lands.

Of the help that the author has received from his wife on the journeys in Palestine, throughout the years of reading and meditating and writing, and in creative criticism of the manuscript, it is impossible to speak.

NOTE 3. *The Sources of the Birth Story.*

The exact date of Jesus' birth is not known. He was born not long before the death of Herod the Great. Herod died at Jericho 4 B.C., probably in March. Jesus' birth must have been at least a full year and probably over two years before the death of Herod. Therefore he was born not later than 5 B.C. and not earlier than 8 B.C.

The fullest narrative of the birth and the one story of the boyhood of Jesus are in St. Luke's Gospel. How did Luke get all this? Obviously the source of these birth stories is very different from the sources of the records of the life of Jesus after he grew up, for these must have originated in the memory of his disciples, who were young men who knew nothing of his birth.

Luke's information, we can at once see, is from a simple Jewish source. A comparison of the literary Greek with which Luke starts his Gospel and the very simple, naïve sentences, mostly beginning with 'And' that follow, show that he was translating from a simple narrative that had been told to him in Aramaic (the language of Mary and Joseph) or in Hebrew. What Luke tells is written from the point of view of Jesus' Mother, Mary of Nazareth.

How, then, could Luke get this information from Mary's point of view? We know from what is said in the Acts of the Apostles (which Luke also wrote) that he met James, the brother of Jesus, in Jerusalem. The detailed knowledge of the Herods (Antipas, Philip, and Archelaus) shown in Luke's writing makes it very probable that he knew one or more Christians from a Herodian

household. Almost certainly among these one was Joanna, the wife of Chuza, steward of Herod Antipas. Joanna was a close friend of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. She travelled through the land with Jesus on his last journey to the Passover. She was at Mary's side at the Crucifixion. If Mary told the story of the birth of Jesus to Joanna, she would pass it on to Luke. For he was eager (as he puts it) 'to trace all things accurately from the first', and he would be sure to ask for information from every one whom he met who had known Jesus.

The story of the Wise Men from the East and the Flight to Egypt is in St. Matthew's Gospel only, where the narrative is written, not as in Luke from Mary's point of view, but exclusively from the point of view of Joseph. It is difficult to reconcile Luke's record of Mary and Joseph taking Jesus straight to Nazareth with what led up to the journey to Egypt. But Luke did not hear of that journey and so described the return to Narazeth as happening at once.

NOTE 4. *The photograph of the Stable.*

Miss F. E. Newton of Mount Carmel gives details about this picture that may be helpful.

'The floor area under the roof is divided into two sections, one is on the level of the threshold, the other is raised and access to it is by means of three or four steps. In the edge of this raised section there is a trough which serves as a manger for the animals standing on the lower floor level. This is seen on the left in the picture. Animal droppings may be distinguished on the floor—these are swept up every day and laid out in the sun to dry, for they provide the fuel which heats the oven to bake the bread.

'Standing on the upper floor level is the only chair known to the villagers and just behind it may be seen part of the cradle for the baby. Built into the wall are the bins for grain—which, when full, are sealed at the top with the same mixture of mud and crushed straw as the bins themselves are made of. The holes at the bottom allow the release of the grain, always what went in first comes out first; the two holes on the right have ledges under them, this is to allow of any circular vessel such as a bowl or basin having some part of its rim inside the ledge under the hole so that the grain in pouring out shall fall into the middle of the vessel and not be

scattered over the edge. Under the holes there is a basket sitting on top of a square with a hole below. This is for the hens to lay in. On the right two small bins—these are for flour. The two floor levels stand for the dwelling house of the human and the animal element of the household—all one family—kept under the same roof for security against enemies.'

NOTE 5. *Daemon-possession.*

Such 'daemon-possession' is familiar to-day in Asia, Africa, and Insulinde; and such daemons are frequently 'cast out', for instance by Christian Chinese and others. It is very difficult even for scientific psychologists to discover exactly what causes it. Indeed, some modern scientific psychologists see no other possible explanation of 'multiple personality', as it is sometimes called, save that of real 'possession' by some spirit. For the whole question of healing this kind of sufferer—a healing for which people to-day use, often wrongly, the word 'miracle' in a way not usual in the Gospels themselves—see Mr. E. R. Micklem's *Miracles and the New Psychology* (Oxford University Press); and *Miracle in History and in Modern Thought* by C. J. Wright (Constable). With regard to 'miracles' the author feels that the one attitude that is certain to be proved to be wrong as modern science—both physical and psychological—advances, is that of denial. For example, any one who in 1900 predicted the actual achievements of the 1930's in wireless transmission and television would have been met with derisive incredulity. Our attitude toward and understanding of miracle as a reasonable event in a spiritual universe is bound to undergo similar modification.

NOTE 6. *Leprosy.*

It is certain that the great majority of cases described as 'leprosy' by the Jews and other peoples in ancient times, including those in the Bible, were not at all the disease now known as 'leprosy'. The Greek word λέπρα (lepra) means 'rough' or 'scaly'. It was used by Greek physicians to describe a skin disease now known as psoriasis —a non-contagious, irritating disease in which white scales form on the body ('a leper white as snow'). The disease called by the Jews 'zara'ath' and described in Leviticus xiii as 'leprosy' has none of the symptoms of leprosy. Other skin diseases like favus (com-

mon to-day among Eastern Jews) and vitiligo (a disease of freckled spots) were also called 'leprosy'. There are modern evidences of cures of some of these diseases by faith.

NOTE 7. *The Greeks.*

The Jews at that time divided the world into Jews and Greeks, i.e. those who were true Jews in blood and worship and those who were of other races or nations. So Greek meant almost the same as Gentile. This use of the title 'Greek' came from the fact that the language of culture and the civilization of the Roman Empire from Greece eastward were largely Greek. As we have seen, for instance, Caesarea Philippi, the ten cities (Decapolis) in Peraea were Greek. There were a Greek theatre and amphitheatre (built by Herod) in Jerusalem. The Grecians (or Hellenist Jews), on the other hand, were true Jews racially who, dispersed over the Empire in a Greek environment, often became Greek in their everyday language and many habits of life. The men who came at this point to Jesus were Greeks (not Jews) in origin, but had been converted from paganism to the Jewish way of worship of the one invisible God whose form could not be shaped by the art of man into statues like those of Apollo or Athene.

NOTE 8. *The Last Supper.*

The apparent direct contradiction between the record of Peter (made in Mark's Gospel and followed by Matthew and Luke) and that of John on the all-important question of the date of this Supper must be shortly discussed here in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. Mark, Matthew, and Luke say that it was the Passover Supper that they ate together (Mark xiv. 12–16; Matthew xxvi. 17–19; Luke xxii. 7–16). As Jesus was executed the next morning, this would make *the first day of the Passover the day of the Crucifixion.* John says that the Supper was 'before the Passover', and even that they thought Judas went out to get food for the Passover when he went out towards the end of this meal to arrange the betrayal (John xiii. 1 and 29). John also says that Caiaphas during the trial by Pilate would not go into the Praetorium so that he might not be defiled and so could eat the Passover (John xviii. 28), and that *the first day of the Passover was the Sabbath, the day after the Crucifixion* (John xix. 31). All these

facts, and the haste of Caiaphas to get the trial and execution finished before the Feast, point to John being right in declaring that the Last Supper was on the night before the Passover.

This has always seemed to be in irreconcilable contradiction with the three other gospels, who say that it was the Passover Supper that they ate. A very learned Jewish scholar, the late Joseph Jacobs, however, has pointed out that when the First Day of the Passover fell on the Sabbath, some Jews (not all) in order to avoid killing and roasting the Passover lamb on the Sabbath eve, put the Supper back twenty-four hours. That is, they ate the Passover Supper on the night before the correct date. This was recognized as being a real Passover meal. Now, on the year of Jesus' death, the Passover *was* on the Sabbath (our Saturday). If Jesus did (as Dr. Jacobs has suggested) put the Supper back twenty-four hours, as he had a clear motive for doing, then the two apparently contradictory versions are reconciled, except with regard to John's statement of the disciples' supposition that Judas had gone to buy provisions for the Feast. In this book this conclusion has been adopted.

NOTE 9. *The Resurrection stories.*

The contradiction in the details of the separate stories of the scenes at the tomb seem irreconcilable as they stand. These contradictions on the one hand reflect the utter bewilderment into which the disciples were all thrown by the incredible news that Jesus was risen; and, on the other hand, they throw into more vivid and clear relief the central facts: first, that the grave was empty; secondly, that the disciples had such real, personal fellowship with Jesus after he had risen that all life was changed from defeat to triumph and from grief to superlative joy; and, thirdly, the fact written indelibly and indisputably across the centuries from that day to this—that in the absolute certainty of that experience these previously grief-ridden, despondent, broken men went out with radiant certainty to conquer the world.

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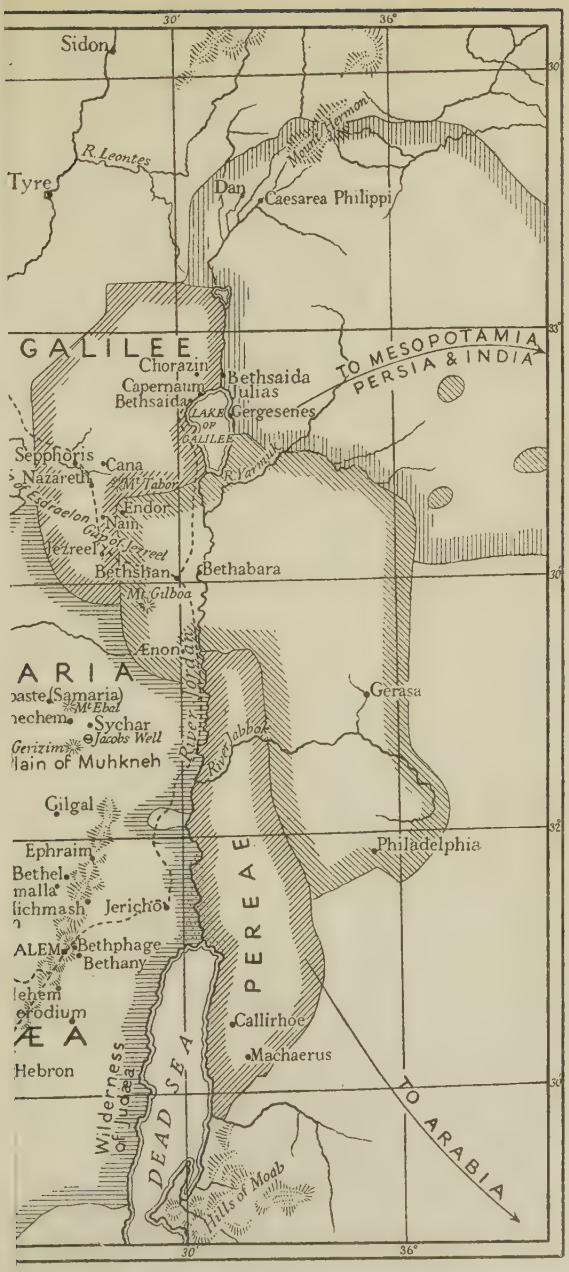
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